Z371.3
.W4P

M691

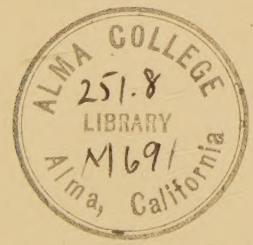
The
PREACHER'S VADEMECUM

SERMON PLANS FOR SUNDAYS, FEASTS OF OUR LORD, THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE SAINTS, ADVENT AND LENTEN COURSES, FORTY HOURS', SACRED HEART DEVOTIONS, RETREATS, CONFERENCES, MAY AND OCTOBER DEVOTIONS, SPECIAL OCCASIONS, ETC.

BY

TWO MISSIONARIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH



NEW YORK
JOSEPH F. WAGNER (INC.)
LONDON: B. HERDER

14837

Nihil Obstat

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur

✠PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.

Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, October 11, 1921.

Copyright, 1921, by JOSEPH F. WAGNER, New York

Preface

The present English version of the work *Vademecum des Prédicateurs, par Deux Missionnaires*, was suggested by the extraordinary success of the French original and by the high esteem in which the work is held by prelates and priests in France.

The wide experience of the authors and their intimate acquaintance with the essentials of practical preaching enabled them to produce in this Vademecum a work most helpful in the ministry of preaching.

The present version is faithful to the original save for some omissions and additions in the section containing sermons for special occasions, where the different conditions of English-speaking countries were to be considered.

It is hoped that the English version will be found of real service, and productive of benefit to souls and to Holy Mother Church.

Contents

PART I

THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

	PAGE
THE FIRST SUNDAY IN JANUARY. The New Year	1
THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. The Child Jesus in the Midst of the Doctors	4
THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. The Marriage Feast at Cana	7
THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. The Leper and the Centurion	10
THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. Our Lord's Sleep	13
THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. The Cockle and the Wheat	16
THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. The Grain of Mustard-Seed and the Leaven	19
SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY. The Laborers in the Vineyard	22
SEXAGESIMA S NDAY. The Word of God	25
QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY. Our Lord Foretells His Passion	28
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT. The Teaching of the Church.	31
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT. The Transfiguration	34
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT. The Cure of the Man Possessed of a Devil	37
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT. Multiplication of the Loaves.	40
PASSION SUNDAY. Our Divine Lord and His Enemies	44
PALM SUNDAY. Easter Communion	47
EASTER SUNDAY. The Holy Women at the Sepulchre	50
LOW SUNDAY. Two Appearances of Our Lord	56
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. The Good Shepherd	58
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Choice of Companions	60
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Jesus Christ and the World	62
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. Rogationtide	63
SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION. The Voice of Conscience	64
PENTECOST. The Holy Spirit	66
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Most Holy Trinity	69
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Relation of the Sacrifices of the Mass and of the Cross	72
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Christ's Love for the Weak and Erring	80
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes	87
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Wrath and Cursing	90
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Blessing of the Bread	91
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Hypocrisy	94
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Works of Mercy	95
NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Reverence for God's Grace and His House	98
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Pharisee and the Publican.	100
ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Deaf and Dumb Man	102
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Good Samaritan.	104
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Ten Lepers	106
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Two Masters	108
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Widow of Naim	110
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Keeping Sunday Holy	112
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Great Commandment	114
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Man Sick of the Palsy	117
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Marriage Feast	118
TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Centurion at Capharnaum	120
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Servant, as Debtor and as Creditor	121
TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Flattery	123
TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Three States of the Soul	126
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The End of the World	129

PAGE

First Sunday of Advent. The General Judgment 131
Second Sunday of Advent. The Works of Christ 133
Third Sunday of Advent. Humility and Pride 136
Fourth Sunday of Advent. The Fulfilment of the Prophecies . . . 137
The Last Sunday of the Year. Time and Eternity 139

PART II

FEASTS OF OUR LORD, OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND OF THE SAINTS

I. Feasts of Our Lord

The Circumcision 141
The Epiphany 143
The Holy Name of Jesus 144
Good Friday 149
Easter Sunday 154
The Ascension 162
The Finding of the Holy Cross 168
Exaltation of the Holy Cross 169
Christmas 170

Sermons on the Holy Eucharist, Forty Hours' Devotion, Holy Thursday, and other Occasions

The Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart 178
Permanence of the Gift of Jesus Christ 179
Universality of the Gift of Christ 181
The Gift of the Holy Eucharist 182
The Eucharist, a Sacrament and a Sacrifice. 185
Forty Hours' Devotion 189
Holy Mass 191
The Tabernacle and the Holy Eucharist 192
The Eucharist, a Mystery of Faith 194
Holy Thursday: The Church and the Eucharist 197
Corpus Christi 199
Corpus Christi Procession 201
The Eucharist, our Glory and our Strength 203
The Right Dispositions for Holy Communion 205
Holy Communion 207
Frequent Communion 209
The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass 212
The Sacred Heart 214
Object of the Devotion 216

II. Feasts of the Blessed Virgin

The Purification 218
The Annunciation 220
Faith and Humility 221
The Three Covenants 222
The Visitation 223
Our Lady of Mount Carmel 225
The Scapular 226
Our Lady of the Angels 227
The Assumption 228
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin 234
The Holy Name of Mary 237
Presentation of the Blessed Virgin 238
The Immaculate Conception 241

May Devotions PAGE
I. Course of Outlines for Every Day in the Month 244
II. Course of Subjects for Every Day in the Month 250

OCTOBER, The Month of the Holy Rosary 255
Feasts of Our Lady in each Month 258
The Scapulars 261

III. FEASTS OF THE SAINTS

St. Joseph 264
St. Joseph, Fosterfather of Jesus Christ 264
St. Joseph's Holiness 265
Three Chief Qualities 266
Three Treasures Entrusted to St. Joseph 267
Outlines of Other Sermons on St. Joseph 268
Conversion of St. Paul 269
St. Francis of Sales 271
St. Matthias 272
St. Thomas Aquinas 273
St. Gabriel 275
St. Patrick 276
St. Benedict 278
St. Francis of Paula 279
St. Mark 280
St. Catherine of Siena 282
St. Joan of Arc 284
The Venerable Bede 287
St. Boniface, Apostle of Germany 288
St. Antony of Padua 289
St. John the Baptist 290
St. Peter 293
St. Vincent de Paul 300
St. Mary Magdalene 302
St. James 303
St. Ignatius Loyola 305
St. Dominic 306
St. Bernard 307
St. Bartholomew 308
Beheading of St. John the Baptist 309
St. Rose of Lima 310
St. Michael the Archangel 311
St. Francis of Assisi 313
St. Brigid 316
St. Teresa 316
All Saints 318
St. Andrew 320
St. Francis Xavier 321
St. Ambrose 324
St. Thomas the Apostle 325
St. Stephen 325
St. John the Evangelist 328
The Holy Innocents 330

PART III

SPECIAL SERMONS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

Dedication of a New Church 333
A Priest's First Mass 334

PAGE

Farewell Discourse on Pastor's Call to Another Mission 336
A Priest's Silver Jubilee 336
The Profession of a Religious 337
Address at a Marriage 338
Graduating Exercises in Girls' Schools 339
Graduating Exercises in Boys' Schools 304
Laying the Cornerstone of a New School 340
ADVENT COURSES 341
LENTEN COURSES 345
MISSIONS AND RETREATS 346
A Retreat 350
I. The End of Man 351
II. Sin 352
III. The Prodigal Son 354
IV. Knowledge of Religion 356
V. The Help Given Us by God 358
VI. The Dignity of the Christian 359
VII. Reformation of Life 362
VIII. A Bad Communion 363
IX. Prayer 365
X. Religion 367
XI. Preparation for Absolution 369
Another Outline for a Retreat 370
A Retreat for Young Girls 371
A Retreat for Women 372
A Retreat for Men 374

Various Subjects Suitable for Missions or Retreats

Love of God 379
Three Reasons for Loving God 381
Knowledge of Christ 381
God and the World 383
Love of Our Neighbor 384
Love of Our Enemies 386
Almsgiving 388
The Decalogue 390
The Observance of Sunday 392
Delay in Conversion 395
The Force of Duty 397
Faith and Irreligion 400
Faith and the Spirit of Faith 403
Honesty according to the World's Standard 405
Irreligion 407
Slander 408
The Mercy of God 410
The Death of Sinners 412
Death and Burial 413
Death 415
Prayers for the Dead 416
Sin 419
Sins of the Tongue 421
Religion 423
The Catechism 424
Human Respect 425
Scandal 427
Christian Doctrine 429
The Perfection of the Doctrines of Christianity 432

PART I

THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

The First Sunday in January

THE NEW YEAR

"Man . . . living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." Job xiv. 1.

A new year has just begun; years pass and men are continually being overwhelmed by sorrow and misery—God alone remains unchanged, always bestowing His favors upon us and preparing us for eternity. Let us consider two things: the year that has ended and the year that has just begun.

I. **The year that has ended.** Three considerations: the past, God's gifts, our failures.

1. Last year belongs to the past; its joys and delights no longer exist; have we done any good to our own souls or to those of others? St. Paul reminds us to do so while we have the time (Gal. vi. 10). Last year's trials and sufferings are over; have we avoided sin? Death has claimed its victims and daily is drawing nearer to us, we shall not escape.

2. *God's gifts.* He has prolonged our life that we might use it as Christians; He gives us natural gifts to promote our welfare in this world, and He bestows upon us supernatural gifts, divine grace, the sacraments, prayers, merit derived from good works. What use have we made of all these benefits?

3. *Our failures.* As we advance in life, are we thinking of heaven? *In omnibus respice finem.* Think of the good that you might have done, and have neglected, of the evil deeds that you have committed, of sins that you have led others to commit. If God had called you away last year perhaps you would have had

to appear before Him with empty hands. The year has gone, but *opera illorum sequentur illos* (Apoc. xiv).

II. **The year that has just begun.** It has been refused to others, but

1. *God has given it to us.* In the case of many it will be the last, be careful to sanctify it. The lost would gladly have it, but they cannot. Avoid sin, look up to heaven, do good works.

2. *Let us make good resolutions.* Overcome faults, acquire virtues, fulfil the duties of our state in life, lay up a store of merit.

3. *Good wishes.* Our risen Lord assumed life anew and appeared to His disciples saying: *"Pax vobis."* I wish you all: (a) Peace with God. Do not neglect your religious duties, prayer, holy Mass, the sacraments. Lead a really Christian life. Whether we like it or not we shall have to give an account to God, and the day of judgment will inevitably come to each of us. (b) Peace with your neighbors. Peace at home between parents and children, masters and servants; all have duties towards one another; peace, too, in your surroundings, with your neighbors, and in your dealings in the course of business and daily work. (c) Peace with yourselves. Look into your own hearts and consider their inclinations. Implant what is good and root up even the appearance of evil. Think over the obedience due to God, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Church, good works.

Peroration. After their captivity the Jews rebuilt the Temple, holding a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. We stand between two years; let us expiate the sins of one, and build up a Christian life in the other, and so God will bless us. Amen.

Alternative Plan

"Pax vobis."—John xx. 26.

It was an old custom for the priest to repeat this wish uttered by our risen Saviour . . . peace with God, our neighbors and ourselves.

I. **Peace with God.** 1. In the past—did you make your peace with God at Christmas, or are you still in a state of sin?

Make good resolutions. 2. For the future. Sanctify yourselves—prayer, Christian conversation, patience under affliction. After the week's work keep Sunday holy.

II. **Peace with our neighbors.** 1. In the family. Christian parents, be on your guard. Christian employers, recognize your duties. Christian children and working people, learn to respect, sympathize with and obey your parents and employers. 2. Peace in your surroundings. Avoid all evil, envy and hatred. Do good works, for they bring you merit. Love those who worship with you and are members of the same spiritual family.

III. **Peace with ourselves.** 1. Each man's heart is a little world within him; pride may rule it, jealousy torture it, or anger disturb it. Cling to God who can restore calm within it. 2. Submission to God, in prosperity or adversity, in joy or sorrow, *fiat voluntas tua.* 3. Our mode of life; honest in our dealings, straightforward in business, loyal to our Christian principles.

Peroration: invocation, good wishes. Amen.

Another Alternative Plan

Good Wishes

Two thoughts: the good wishes offered to us and those that we offer to others.

I. **The good wishes offered to us.** Many good wishes are absolute falsehoods, others are a mere form of words, most are the outcome of civility and few are sincere. Carefully worded compliments, flattering letters, shallow affection. We certainly cannot all recognize ourselves under these flattering forms of address, although they may contain a grain of truth.

II. **Good wishes that we offer to others.** 1. See in the Bible Abraham's wish for Ishmael. . . . Joseph's for Jacob. . . . Jonathan's for David. 2. As Christians, remember St. Paul's wish for Agrippa: *Opto apud Deum.* 3. As men, recall union of heart and mind and brotherly good will. 4. As citizens, remem-

ber how Esther and Mardochai desired the welfare of their nation.

Applications, details, peroration.

The First Sunday after Epiphany

THE CHILD JESUS IN THE MIDST OF THE DOCTORS

A touching picture! The most perfect Son leaves His parents and turns back to be with God, and the most holy Mother understands that He must be sought at the foot of the altar, whilst the bystanders and doctors are amazed at His wisdom and knowledge. The Child Jesus foreshadows His threefold mission to mankind; He is the Model for children, the Teacher of the learned, the Lawgiver of the world.

I. **The Model for children.** We were to learn from Him to say "Our Father, who art in heaven," and henceforth He speaks of this heavenly Father. Above all things then it behooves us to serve God, and to have true devotion to Him. Nothing is more just, necessary and useful. Consequently be careful about prayer, Sunday Mass, devotion to our Lady, the sacraments. Be eager for instruction. When the mass of the people started homewards after the festival was over, Jesus came back. Children, you have three days' retreat before your first Communion; boys and girls, you can come to instructions and to catechizing. The evangelist tells us that Jesus asked and answered questions and listened—so that the bystanders wondered. Begin to copy Him whilst you are young.

II. **The Teacher of the learned.** Jesus listened then, but the day will come when all the world will hear Him. Moses foretold that day, and Christ's Gospel belongs to every age. (a) The doctors in Jerusalem were astonished, for since our Lord is the eternal Word of God, His doctrine is divine. They perceived this fact, but failed to understand it. (b) Jesus awakened men's sense of the supernatural. *Verba vitae aeternae habes,* cried St. Peter (John vi. 69). He brought God within reach of man, and through Him man was to become the son of God by

adoption. (c) He spoke of God and His rights, our duties and our destiny. At no time in the world's history has any sage or philosopher done this in the same degree; every word uttered by Jesus has found its echo in the hearts of men.

III. **The Lawgiver of the world.** Every nation has had lawgivers, but how long has their work lasted? What was it worth? Civilization has retained none of it. Whereas (a) Jesus Christ founded a society; we may almost call the doctors His disciples, for they acknowledged His superiority as a child. When He grew up, He was destined to put to shame the scribes, Pharisees and all who argued against Him, and the people were to declare that no man ever spoke as He did. At His death He left His teaching in the minds of the apostles, and after His resurrection He sent them forth to preach to all nations. Here we have His Church. (b) By means of this Church He has a ministry, exerts His power and acts. God alone could bestow upon it efficiency and immortality. No other institution has been so frequently assailed and has nevertheless remained victorious. (c) Jesus Christ is the sovereign ruler of our souls. He governs our intellect, for His teaching solves all problems regarding God, our origin and final destiny. He rules our conscience, for His moral teaching constitutes its goodness and His Sacrament of Penance restores to sinners the grace which opens to them the gate of life eternal. He rules our hearts, for He alone can penetrate to their depths, suggesting even difficult actions, soothing our passions, requiring of us sacrifices and reminding us of our glorious reward. Great men are famous in the history of the world, but every nation in every age has raised altars to Christ.

Peroration. Think of the dignity possessed by the holy Child, and of the destiny that lay before Him. The prophets had spoken of Him, the Messias, our Redeemer. Let us go to Him, let us listen to His teaching and put it into practice. A Christian life prepares men for heaven. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Christian Childhood

Immediately after the Epiphany, the Church calls upon us to consider the Child Jesus at the age of twelve, when He was already concerned about His heavenly Father's interests. In this way the Divine Word at once revealed the purpose of His incarnation. The holy Child Jesus is the model for children to copy. Let us learn from Him what Christian childhood ought to be. It owes three duties to God, viz., to love Him, to obey Him and to trust Him.

I. **Love of God.** God is our supreme Father; Jesus considered Him more than Mary and Joseph. Our love of God shows itself in gratitude towards, zeal for and delight in Him. (a) *Gratitude.* From three points of view—natural, social and religious—we owe everything to God. Do not follow the example of those who forget Him, but rather that of those who serve and thank Him. (b) *Zeal.* Be full of zeal for Him in return for all His gifts; watch over His interests; resist His enemies; honor His holy Name and never join those who dishonor it. (c) *Delight in God.* You ought to be proud to serve the greatest of all kings. God is great and loving and possesses all perfection. He promises us everlasting happiness. We have acted too long like the prodigal son; let us return to our heavenly Father.

II. **Obedience to God.** This is shown in submission to His judgments, His will and even His chastisement. (a) *His judgments.* God's word never deceives, and it reaches us through the Church. He is truth, and our feeble minds cannot arrive at a different conclusion from His, since He is the supreme judge of all things. (b) *His will.* God's precepts never change. By the law of Moses children who disobey their parents were punished with death, and to transgress God's commandments is a mortal sin. (c) *His chastisement.* When we sin, we deserve punishment. Our nature is corrupt and therefore we must inevitably suffer. Our souls ought to acquire merit, and cannot do so without suffering.

III. **Trust in God.** This confidence should be prompt, com-

plete and firm. (a) *Prompt.* At the least sign of danger a child calls out to his parents and runs to them; we ought to go to God in the same way: prayer, ejaculations, short aspirations if only they are heartfelt and earnest. *Ne nos inducas in tentationem* (Matt. vi. 13). (b) *Complete.* There should be no limit to our trust in God, no matter what difficulty we have to encounter, or how great the help that we ask of Him. He will never forsake us. (c) *Firm.* If God be on our side, we need fear no man, and no evil spirit however enraged against us. *Quis ut Deus?*

Peroration. Three things to practice: to give God all our affection . . . to obey Him in all things . . . to have recourse to Him in all our needs. If we do this, we shall be true Christians and worthy of heaven. Amen.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

THE MARRIAGE FEAST AT CANA

"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there."—John ii. 1.

This was the first of our Lord's series of miracles, and it contains several important lessons for us. We learn from it that marriage is blessed by God, that it should be Christian in spirit and promote peace in the family, and that our Lady exerts her influence and sympathy in our temporal concerns.

Let us consider three points: the marriage, the spirit of this marriage, the details regarding the feast.

I. **The marriage.** There are two places called Cana in Palestine—one in the tribe of Aser, the other in that of Zabulon, which formed part of Galilee, and was not far from Nazareth. (a) St. John the Baptist had already borne testimony to our Lord, who had at that time four disciples, viz., Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael (Bartholomew). (b) Who were the married couple? Many believe the bridegroom to have been Simon the Cananean (i.e., of Cana); others suggest that it was St. John the Evangelist, who was led by the miracle to follow our Lord at

once. (c) Are all family gatherings Christian in character? At Cana the guests were still unaware of our Lord's divinity, but they recognized His goodness, and Mary was noted for her virtues. Your conversations would be of a different kind, were you to think that you are entertaining women of the highest virtue and young men of perfect purity.

II. **The spirit of the marriage.** At marriage the husband and wife look forward to happiness based upon unchanging love and faithfulness. If they are to continue to think alike, to support, trust and love each other, they must ask God's assistance. He instituted marriage and our Lord raised it to the dignity of a sacrament; hence the union of two hearts and two wills ought to be in accordance with God's designs and the grace given by Christ. Every married couple is bound to practice their religion, and to associate only with persons who lead a good life, such as our Lord's disciples at Cana.

III. **The details of the feast.** (a) Wine is a type of charity; when it is rich and strong it restores vigor. When charity fails there can be no peace in the house without divine intervention. (b) Our Lady's interference was the outcome of her charity. We know that women's gossip often displays curiosity or spitefulness. Be kind in your remarks concerning your neighbors. (c) Our Lord said in reply: "What is it to me and to thee?" Let us take no notice of our friends' impetuosity and defer our own action until the proper time. (d) Our Lady spoke to the waiters and Jesus gave them an order—the water was changed into wine, such good wine as had not been supplied before. In this way charity triumphed. Bear in mind that our Lady's intercession was powerful and that Jesus was able to work a miracle, that the guests were naturally astonished and that the faith of the few disciples already called was strengthened.

Peroration. The dignity of marriage, the Christian spirit at family meals, the presence of God, the everlasting feast in heaven. Amen.

Alternative Plan

God's Hour and Our Duties

"Jesus saith to her . . . 'My hour is not yet come.' His mother saith to the waiters: 'Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.'"—John ii. 4, 5.

You have often heard sermons upon to-day's gospel: let us just fix our attention upon these two verses, which remind us of God's hour and our duties, two very important things.

I. **God's hour.** God is free to act as He will, when He will, and how He will. Our Lady had no power to advance her divine's Son's hour; charity constrained her, but He intended to wait. Let us learn to pray and to wait. God in His providence orders all things with a view to their end. The reason is in Him, but it is carried out only in course of time. Our Lady's request and her words to the waiters entered into the reason and prepared the way for its being carried into effect. At last the hour comes (account of the miracle). How do we act? Here in this world we are often in a hurry. We should do better to raise our thoughts to God and consider His liberty of action, His foresight for us, the means that He has chosen to employ and the way in which His will is done. He consults our spiritual welfare which outweighs all other considerations, though we are apt to forget it. Far inferior to this is our moral importance in our own family and in society—the saints and martyrs hardly gave this a thought, for their eyes were fixed on God. Of still lower rank are our material concerns, fleeting and perishable things that vary according to circumstances and individuals.

We do wrong to murmur against God's designs for our welfare. He will act in His own good time and do what He sees to be best for us. Who can know what we need as well as He can?

II. **Our duties.** Our Lady spoke and the waiters obeyed her. Let us throughout life obey God and His Church; such loyal obedience is a virtue. (a) It makes us capable of great virtues. *Qui fidelis est in minimo, et in majori fidelis est* (Luke

xvi. 10). It increases grace within us by preparing our souls for its reception, it makes us watchful in all things, and brave to overcome difficulties and temptations. Carelessness, on the other hand, would make us less capable of receiving grace, less watchful and more easily discouraged. (b) Obedience is itself a great virtue. In God's sight much that we think trifling is of great importance, because it will prove a source either of virtue or of sin. If we really love Him, we shall consider nothing insignificant. Every act derives its value from the intention with which it is performed, because God judges the heart rather than the deed. An act owes its perfection to its circumstances, just as a picture owes its beauty to the harmony of its outline, coloring and grouping. Our life is made up of details. Our Lady was not reduced to silence by her divine Son's reply; on the contrary, she took upon herself to give an order to the servants, who obeyed her, although she was not the mistress of the house. Jesus perceived her faith in Himself and the confidence of the others; He saw what would be beneficial to the married couple and expedient for the waiters, and so He yielded to circumstances and wrought the miracle.

Peroration. St. Epiphanius remarks that, because they serve Him always, the most trifling actions of good men please God more than do the occasional great works of other Christians, who serve Him only from time to time. St. Augustine says: "What is small, is small, but to be always faithful in a small thing is great."

Third Sunday after Epiphany

THE LEPER AND THE CENTURION

"And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him."—Matt. viii. 1.

To-day's gospel records two miracles—our Lord, contrary to His usual practice, asked no questions of the leper whom He cleansed, but the centurion had to prove his faith before obtaining the cure of his servant.

I. The leper. What was leprosy? A horrible disease, in which the body was covered with red or white blotches. It was contagious and every leper had to leave his abode and live alone. If he were cured, he had to go to the Temple that the fact might be acknowledged, and he offered sacrifice there. How did this leper act? He heard the multitude and, running to our Lord, besought His help, and Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched and healed him, then told him to go at once to the Temple and to speak to no one on the way. The man's faith was deep and genuine; he recognized in Jesus a divine power, and in spite of the law he approached the crowd. Thus he put our Saviour above Moses and knew Him to be the Messias. There was no known remedy for leprosy; a leper must either resign himself to it, or ask a miracle of God. The leprosy of our sins cuts us off from good works and puts a barrier between us and good Christians, the saints and heaven. Let us go to Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance; in it the priest is empowered by Him to give us absolution. A leper who was poor offered in sacrifice two sparrows or two doves; a rich man gave a lamb in addition. We have here a mystical suggestion of confession, contrition and satisfaction.

II. The centurion. He was an officer in the Roman army, having under his command a hundred men belonging to the garrison of Capharnaum. He was a wealthy man, a pagan, and had won the good will of the Jews by building them a synagogue. This centurion's servant was paralyzed, and the master sent some of his friends to Jesus, not venturing to go himself. Our Lord promised to come and heal the sufferer, and the centurion, feeling ashamed, went out to meet Him. He recognized our Lord's power, to which everything must bow, and so he had only one thing to say. As a centurion he was in the habit of giving orders; Jesus could govern the laws of nature and work the desired miracle. What wonderful faith! Our Lord extolled it and foretold the conversion of the Gentiles, who would eventually take the place of Abraham's descendents. "Many shall come from the east and the west." He said also that unbelievers would be shut out from heaven and lost.

We should do well to meditate upon these great lessons taught by our Lord. Some particular circumstance often caused Him to state a point of doctrine; in this case He rewarded the centurion's faith by granting him the miraculous cure of his servant. All these points can easily be applied to Christians of the present day.

Summing up; resolutions.

Alternative Plan

The Cleansing of the Leper

Leprosy is a type of sin. Three chief features of it: it causes great disfigurement, it is highly contagious, it is very hard to cure.

I. **Great disfigurement.** (a) Whitish blotches appear on the skin, and sometimes cover the whole body; the nails drop off; eyes, nose and mouth dry and shrivel up; the hair becomes white. The leprosy of sin attacks our senses, robs us of our happiness, brings evil upon us. (b) A leper was banished from his home and from all human intercourse; he had to live alone; his food was left for him at some appointed place where he could fetch it. In the same way a sinner no longer belongs to God's household, the society of the elect, the kingdom of heaven. He does not share in either prayers or sacraments. Although he may live in the midst of the faithful, he can gain no merit. Well is it for him if he perceive his state and desire to pray, for this is a grace which will bring him back to the right path. We ought to fear darkening of the understanding, weakening of faith, perversion of the will.

II. **Contagion.** In social life a spiritual leper spreads disease by means of seductive conversation, which is apt to lead upright souls to sin; by scandalous example, which suggests evil to the weak, since evil paths are easy to follow; by artful devices, which ensnare others. A sinner is in himself spiritually weakened, and so he feels distaste for prayer, forsakes the practice of his religion, and resists the grace that might effect his cure.

III. **Cure very hard.** The Mosaic law forbade any man to touch a leper, and punished severely any leper who did not avoid other men. Consequently he was forced to live alone or with other lepers. How was a cure possible? The same is the case of a sinner; he is blind to the danger of sin; he lives cut off from good people who might influence him to do right; he sins habitually in the company of others like himself. We ought to have recourse to God, who alone is all-holy; He can give us His grace and heal our souls. He is full of mercy and His sacraments can accomplish this work.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

OUR LORD'S SLEEP

"When He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him."—Matt. viii. 23.

Our Saviour taught His followers in many different ways, and all His words, miracles and actions supply us with some lesson to learn or some example to imitate. Consider His slumber in the boat; all around us may be uproar, but within us is the calm resulting from faith and good works.

I. **Around us.** A truly Christian soul determines to live for God, and at once has to face the opposition, mockery and wickedness of the world. Remember how the disciples followed their Master into the boat, *et ecce motus magnus factus est.* The more you desire to stand firmly by what is right, the more you will have to suffer. As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, we must expect the same fate. We must face the cross, persecution, antagonism of heretics, contradiction of apostates, etc., a long list. The Church has encountered all these things and we must expect our share. But the world will pass away; fear not; God's hour will come in due time.

II. **Within us.** Stand firm, regardless of the storm without. Jesus is in the boat and He remains calm. He is truth and justice, God everlasting. Three dangers threaten a boat: the tossing of the waves, which may swamp it; the force of the

winds, which may break its masts; the presence of rocks on which it may be flung. In the same way three dangers threaten every Christian: passions which disturb him and destroy his peace of mind, desires, ambition, fear, temptations are all like stormy waves, and, when the temptations grow stronger, they resemble angry breakers. Satan suggests and encourages them and hurls them against us. Moreover, the world is always with us, like a rock upon which we are driven by human respect, conventionality, foolish opinions and false pleasures.

What sarcastic remarks are made about a young woman who devotes herself to her household, a young man who does not take part in all sorts of amusements, a young girl who does not care for balls and parties! Truth and justice are on our side. The apostles in their distress called to their Master, and He rising up commanded the winds and there came a great calm. Turn then to Him, and heed not the words of your adversaries. We go to Jesus by means of good works, prayer, the sacraments, watchfulness. His grace will fill and strengthen you. Amen.

Alternative Plan

The Enemies and the Faith

"When He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him."—Matt. viii. 23.

In this gospel we may consider three things: the storm that threatened the boat, the disciples, brave at first, but afterwards fearful; our Saviour asleep and afterwards restoring calm.

I. **The storm.** After preaching the Sermon on the Mount, in which He outlined His doctrine, our Lord cured a leper, the centurion's servant; St. Peter's mother-in-law and some men possessed with devils. He then went down to the shore of the Lake of Tiberias and entered Peter's boat. Soon a great storm arose so that the waves covered the boat.

Threefold application. (a) The world is like an ocean; there are all sorts of doctrines and opinions; everything is contin-

ually changing and restless, as history proves. Some nations have disappeared, barbarians have invaded various countries and swept away all their civilization. (b) The religions of antiquity caused disorder in men's minds, wills and hearts. Think of the religions of China, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome! What diversity! Moses and his law revealed the true God, but even the Jews often forgot him. (c) After our Lord's coming heresies and schisms frequently arose in one place or another. There has been a perpetual strife regarding Christian doctrine and morality, the sacraments, the outward essentials of public worship, the veneration of saints, their relics and images, and the obedience due to the Church.

II. **The Apostles.** (a) They followed Jesus into the boat, so what reason had they to fear? Their Master was there. But St. Paul tells us: *Omnes qui pie volunt vivere in Christo persecutionem patientur* (2 Tim. iii. 12). This statement is universally true. (b) Hence the apostles, being loyal to Jesus, suffered as long as they lived, and their successors have always had to struggle against His adversaries. They have been persecuted in body and have died as martyrs, or they have been deprived of their possessions, or tortured either in mind, by those who opposed the teachings of the Church, or in their will, by those who aimed at demoralizing them. (c) Every Christian undergoes persecution: stormy passions, the wind of false doctrines, the rising tide of human respect and immorality, the constant warfare between good and evil. We may wish to stand firm, but the devil does his utmost to ruin us, and even the greatest saints have felt fear in this world.

III. **Our Divine Lord.** He said nothing—the noisy disputes of the world are unheard in heaven, as long as our souls are in union with Him. When difficulties, storms and tempests come upon us, He leaves us to use our liberty, that we may gain merit. It is for us to cry: "Lord, save us, we perish." He is at hand ready to give us His grace and save us. We cannot do without God.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE COCKLE AND THE WHEAT

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field."—MATT. xiii. 24.

The sower is God; the field is the Church; the enemy is the devil and sin. The servants propose to pull up the cockle, but the master bids them wait until the harvest. Two points to notice: (a) In society the mixture of good and bad has some advantages, but (b) its dangers must be avoided.

I. **Advantages.** Where good and bad are intermingled, they are not clearly distinguished. If the Church were composed exclusively of good people, should we belong to it? If we did, we might be vain and proud of our righteousness, and, being liable to human imperfections, we should soon become slack, and slackness leads to sin. If we did not belong to the Church, we should be apt to despair, and to live and die in sin. We should probably fail to acknowledge our faults, to understand the need of repentance and to beg God's mercy. Uncertainty is therefore beneficial; we are edified by the example of others, the Gospel is preached to all alike, and in this world God alone can read our hearts. Where good and bad are intermingled, the bad serve as a warning to the good. Where all are good, many defects pass unnoticed, charity finds excuses for others, and often people find excuses for themselves; but the reproaches and criticisms of the bad keep us continually on our guard. The "children of this world" are our example, inasmuch as they neglect no means of attaining their end, so they teach us to exert ourselves. Moreover they understand how to unite to accomplish something wrong—can we not imitate them in their readiness to act in concert? If we really appreciate goodness, we are disgusted at the faults of the wicked, and thus are impelled to do right. Sometimes the good are persecuted by the evil, and this may be of advantage to God and the Church, and may promote our own sanctification. History teaches us that persecutors, false philosophers,

authors of heresy and schism and all the enemies of religion have caused Christians to advance in sanctity, to stand firm in the truth, to remain loyal to the Church, and to be more careful about their own salvation.

II. **Dangers to be avoided.** The enemy sowed cockle in order to choke the good seed. Therefore let us dread the influence of bad companions, evil conversation and human respect in our dealings with others. Let us shun the spiritual poison of anti-Christian teaching, bad books and rash judgments savoring of error. Let us avoid all unnecessary intercourse with bad people, and limit ourselves to business dealings unconnected with any religious doctrine. Even in business matters we should try to deal with those whose opinions approximate more closely to our own. Stand firm against worldly wisdom, lax principles and impressions likely to carry you away. If we do not resist, we shall fall.

Conclusion. In human society cockle and wheat grow side by side; this is both inevitable and dangerous. In the Church sinners and the righteous live together—let us be watchful. In our souls are defects which are apt to lead us into sin; let us root them up, and live as good Christians.

Alternative Plan

The Intermingling of Good and Bad

Two points: 1. Association with the good tends either to the salvation or the condemnation of the wicked. 2. Association with the bad should increase the knowledge and merits of the good.

I. **The good benefit the bad** (1) by their instruction, which is fruitful because it possesses truth, authority and charity. (2) By their example, which demonstrates the possibility of virtue, the power of religion, the guilt of wrong-doing. (3) By their prayers, which draw down benefits from God, satisfy His justice, arouse His mercy, and secure success and prosperity even in temporal concerns.

II. **The wicked benefit the good** (1) by teaching them to be on their guard against weakness, faithful in spite of weariness, and gratefully mindful of favors received. (2) By increasing their merits, since the allurement of bad examples adds value to the steadfastness of the upright; the wickedness of sinners causes trials from which the good may derive merit, and their sinful lives impel the righteous to love God more and more.

Another Alternative Plan

The Dangers of Worldly Prosperity

Life in the world is full of contradictions, and we are apt to be dismayed at the prosperity of the wicked in comparison with the good. But God's hour will come, as this gospel teaches us. Let us consider the beginning, course and end of this prosperity.

I. **The beginning.** God created everything, but men forget Him, and so *Cum dormirent homines, venit inimicus;* whilst they rest content in their good fortune, Satan makes it fatal to them. They sleep; the sleep of death leads to corruption in the tomb, but the sinner sleeps content in idleness and forgetfulness. Successful worldlings are idle whilst others work. Duties demand some exertion, but they are set aside and then forgotten. Satan makes prosperity fatal to worldly men. Those unhappy people who forget God plead in excuse the necessity of working hard, and successful worldlings regard themselves as having made their own fortune. If they look back upon their past years of labor, it is only in order to boast of them; they have no pity on the poor, give less money in alms, become miserly or neglect their business for the sake of amusement. It is not long before they fall into sin.

II. **The course of prosperity.** God in His turn leaves them to their own devices, and He does so for four reasons. (a) He alone can bring good out of evil; they can do nothing but make prosperity a source of evil. (b) He allows wicked men to live amongst us, that the good may be tried and rendered perfect. (3) There is no excuse for the wicked because they

ought to benefit by intercourse with the good. (4) Since they have forsaken God, it is only just that they in their turn should be forsaken by Him. God does not enlighten their minds but leaves them in spiritual darkness. They think but little of their faults, but nevertheless they will be punished for them.

III. **The end of prosperity.** The Gospel tells us plainly that the cockle will be gathered up in bundles to be burnt. The righteous enter *per angustam portam;* the wicked are bound. Woe to the rich, who enjoy everything here below; woe to those who laugh now, but will weep then. Your joys and pleasures have all been counted, and you will receive the same number of tortures. What is to be done? Three things: keep watch over yourselves that you may not yield to the devil; fear God, and let moderation govern the use that you make of your prosperity.

Conclusion. Turn to God who gathers His faithful servants round Him in heaven.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED AND THE LEAVEN

To-day's gospel contains two parables. The grain of mustard-seed represents the Church, which grew so rapidly as to spread over the whole world, and the leaven mixed with three measures of meal represents her doctrine, which converted the world.

I. **The grain of mustard-seed, the Church.** God was the sower. Our Lord came into the world, lived in a little out-of-the-way town, preached for three years to most obscure people, worked miracles among them and died a shameful death. Thus was the little grain of seed planted in the earth; it vanished and apparently died. Then came the glorious Resurrection, the triumphant Ascension, and the conversion of the representatives of seventeen nations at Pentecost. The apostles went forth to carry the Word of God to all known races. No religion has ever been so universal, nor had so many adherents, nor attracted so strongly the outcasts of the

human race. The apostles, who preached the Gospel, were uneducated men, of no particular strength or learning, but they were sent forth by God, who inspired and helped them and worked wonders through them.

II. **The leaven, the doctrine of the Church.** The woman in the parable represents the Church, through whose activity our Lord's teaching was to influence the three varieties of power in the world. (a) Material force, which bends the heads and subjugates the bodies of men. (b) Intellectual force, represented by philosophers, legislators and leaders of public opinion. (c) The force of the human will, which sets up its own standard of conduct and morality.

Are the teachings of Christianity to be stifled here?

The Church was founded by God and her doctrines proceed from Him. Brute force wielded by those in power might indeed make martyrs, but it was eventually to be modified by Christian civilization. The force which leads men of intellect astray may give rise to heresies, but divine truth will at length enlighten men's minds and turn them to God. The force of passions degrading to men in every age produces sensual beings, who claim to be a law to themselves, but the Gospel precepts were destined to civilize the nations and to produce virtues hitherto unknown. Thus the great tree shelters every race, and the leaven of the Gospel has worked in every age. God's holy angles are the birds in the parable; they come to bear testimony to men's merits and to impress God's seal upon their souls. Happy are the children of the Church, who treasure her faith! For them is destined the everlasting kingdom of heaven.

Alternative Plan

Fruits of the Law of Christ

The grain of mustard-seed, the smallest of all seeds, grows into a tree. This represents sanctity, which makes humble souls inheritors of heaven. Leaven, which sets up fermenta-

tion, is indispensable in making bread. It represents the strength derived from God's law. Two points to notice: Every Christian who obeys God's law is sure of sanctity, which makes him great, and shares in the strength, which renders our faith triumphant.

I. **Sanctity.** The law of Christ contained in the Gospels is holy (1) in its founder, Jesus Christ; the founders of other religions were only men: (2) in its maxims; Pagan laws tolerated much immorality and many crimes, but the law of Christ throws light on the laws of nature, civilizes laws enacted by men, perfects the Mosaic law and interprets for us the laws of God; (3) in its precepts; for it subordinates things of time and sense to those of heaven, and to such as affect the welfare of our souls; (4) in its followers; since from the beginning they have displayed heroic virtue even to the point of martyrdom, and in the course of ages countless saints have possessed power to work miracles, and Christ's disciples always are capable of supernatural good works; (5) in its mysteries; everything that brings us nearer to God and tends to add dignity to His teaching and perfection to His worship. We have many reasons for holding fast to God's law and seeking our sanctification.

II. **Strength.** (1) This strength was displayed when Christianity was first established. Our Lord overcame all obstacles, in His active ministry, in His Passion at the hands of His enemies, in His death on the cross, and He prevailed even over the stone set and sealed at His sepulchre. The apostles too underwent many trials, they traveled, preached, met with continual opposition, died as martyrs. (2) This strength was displayed in the propagation of Christianity. On the first day representatives of seventeen nations witnessed it; the apostles traveled over the whole known world, and a few centuries later barbarian invaders adopted Christianity. (3) This strength is still displayed in the lives of good Christians, who observe God's law faithfully, help their neighbors by innumerable good works, sanctify themselves in spite of the degradation of nature, the snares of pleasure, the allurements of the world and the suggestions of the devil. In every state of

life the law of Christ gives men strength and secures thus their salvation.

Septuagesima

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

"A householder went out early in the morning."—Matt. xx. 1.

Three points in this gospel. (a) The vineyard to be cultivated; the householder sends laborers to it early in the morning. (b) The market place where idlers stand waiting for work; the householder finds men there at every hour. (c) The wages paid at the end of the day—some of the men are jealous of others. There is plenty of matter here for study from the point of view of modern society. We have, therefore, three things to consider, work, idleness, envy.

I. **Work.** The householder represents God; the vineyard our souls; the laborers all Christians. From the beginning of the world, even in Paradise, God required men to work. Work has become *a form of expiatory suffering*—we are all sinners, we all are apt to feel disinclined for work, we all often do as little as possible, but we ought to accept it in the spirit of penance, remembering God's words: *Maledicta erit terra . . .* Work is *a safeguard.* A wise man said: *Semper diabolus te inveniat occupatum.* Since work puts the devil to flight, it is a safeguard against sin. In every rank of life, work is necessary. Even in the contemplative religious Orders manual labor is prescribed by their rule.

II. **Idleness.** From six o'clock in the morning laborers were waiting to be hired for a day's work. The householder told them to go to his vineyard. You have been Christians since your baptism—the first hour; in youth—the third hour; in the prime of life—at noon; when your strength begins to fail—the ninth hour; in old age—the eleventh hour. In your early years you were full of hope and enthusiasm; you had many resources, but obstacles arose and habits were formed. Often we see men sunk in frivolity, worldly occupations and indiffer-

ence, and at last final impenitence. God is always calling to every one of us: "Remember your soul." The market place was the haunt of idlers and gossips, where many useless words, falsehoods, uncharitable remarks, and slanders were uttered and plans for wrongdoing were discussed. Listen to God when He bids you work in His vineyard and remember your souls.

III. **Envy.** When the day's work was over, the steward began to pay the men their wages, and they grumbled so much that the master had to remonstrate with them. Envy attacks (1) God, the source of all good and the giver of all rewards. It finds fault with His goodness, providence, justice and mercy. He replies: "Are you angry with me for being good to your neighbor? How have I wronged you?" (2) our neighbor, who receives God's gifts. This amounts to murder in thought and word, and sometimes in deed. (3) Oneself. An envious man undermines his own happiness, gives himself no peace; far from doing himself any good, he often does actual harm. Remember the householder's words to the envious laborer: "I do thee no wrong . . . take what is thine and go thy way."

Peroration. All that we have comes from God; it is our business to cultivate it, working so as to gain merit. In heaven our reward will be exceeding great (Gen. xv. 1).

Alternative Plan

The Laborers in the Vineyard

At Christmas and Epiphany we recall our Lord's manifestation to the world; Septuagesima marks the beginning of our preparation for Easter, and to-day's gospel reminds us that we must work, in order to sanctify our souls.

Three points: the vineyard, the householder, the wages.

I. **The vineyard.** A parable is a story taken from some ordinary occurrence, and told so as to suggest, by way of comparison, lofty thoughts affecting our souls. The prophets spoke of a vineyard as signifying the human race, and especially God's chosen people. In the Gospels a vineyard signifies

the Church, those whom Christ has purchased by His death on the cross. Each member of the Church possesses a soul to which our Lord offers the grace of His sacraments. God requires us to work in His vineyard, i.e., to labor for the sanctification of our own souls, the edification of our neighbors, the defence of the Church and the increase of His glory. Our *souls* have duties; we must obey God's law conscientiously, so as to continue in the state of grace. Our *neighbors* have rights, let us respect them and do good rather than harm to all men. The *Church* gives us the divine revelation that has civilized the world. Let us accept her teaching and observe her laws. *God* is merciful and mighty; let us be careful never to offend Him, but serve Him faithfully, so as to deserve a place in heaven.

There is plenty of work for us all, whether we be good or bad. Beware then of being idle.

II. **The householder** represents God, who created and sanctifies the world. *He went out early in the morning.* Eternal Himself, He created time, and from the beginning of time He has shown mercy to mankind. The Divine Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, lay in a manger, redeemed us on the cross, and sent forth His apostles to found the Church all over the world. From the tabernacle He calls us to Himself. A new born child ought to receive baptism, and later on Holy Communion. *The householder went out at the ninth hour.* How many idle people there are, living as pagans in forgetfulness of God! Abraham and Moses produced a nation that served Him and prophets who labored in His interests. Our Lord, too, established a new race, by means of His Gospel preached and His Church established throughout the world. A full-grown man, putting aside the passions of youth, devotes himself to the performance of his duties as a citizen and as a Christian. *The householder went out at the eleventh hour.* In the old age of the world, God still is merciful, and sometimes He utters reproaches. In the old age of nations, the Church still offers her sacraments and teaching, in spite of their coldness and indifference. In the old age of human beings, Christ still bestows graces, that they may return to Him. Many nations are idle, being plunged in idolatry, heresy or schism, whilst others are unproductive

through refusal to submit to the Church. Many individuals, too, are unproductive, devoid of virtue and merit. "Go to the vineyard, my soul."

III. **The wages.** The evening of life comes, and the night of death. God begins with the last comers; His goodness outstrips His justice, and His graces are indeed given gratis. Even the best of us have done nothing to merit heaven. Every creature has an end, but the soul of man is immortal, made in the likeness of God—this is a unique privilege. The work done by the laborers who began early in the morning was longer and more tiring, but was it better? May not those who began later have worked with more gratitude towards the householder, who might have put them off until the morrow? Those converted late in life look forward indeed to heaven, but there are many degrees of glory. Let us not complain that the Church welcomes even very late conversions.

Peroration. Many are called by their baptism and Christian surroundings, but few are chosen, who profit by God's favors. Let us dread His reproaches and serve Him with real love. Amen.

Sexagesima

THE WORD OF GOD

"When a very great multitude was gathered together."—Luke viii. 4.

The parable of the sower. Our Lord Himself explained it to His apostles. Some refuse to hear God's Word—others hear, but will not think of it—others fail to benefit by it—only a few put it into practice. Nevertheless it *is* the Word of God. Let us listen to it—it will lead us to God; let us think about it—we shall have to answer for it before God; let us put it into practice.

I. **The Word of God.** The seed is the Word of God (v. 11). St. John tells us (i. 11, 12) that the Word *in propria venit . . . quotquot receperunt eum dedit eis . . . filios Dei fieri . . . et habitavit in nobis.* God is the great Sower, and the Word of God is the seed, weak at Bethlehem but strong during the three years of His active ministry, crushed at the Passion, glorious at the

Resurrection, and destined to be the food of the world from the day of the first Pentecost. The Church distributes the Word to the nations. She was commissioned to do so: "As my Father hath sent me, so do I send you." She says: "Go, teach, baptize." "He who heareth you, heareth me." Silence on the part of her ministers would be blameworthy: "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Her ministers are God's delegates.

II. **The Word of God leads men to Him.** In Ps. 118 we read: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum et lumen semitis meis.* This divine lantern and light teaches us three things:

1. *To know ourselves.* Many of our tendencies, defects and sins are due to our wilful blindness; we plunge our intellect, will and heart into darkness, and so go to ruin, but the Word of God enlightens us, shows us how we ought to act, instructs us.

2. *To be on our guard.* St. James says that a man who is a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, may be compared with one who beholds his face in a glass, and then goes away and forgets what he is like. Learn to forsake sin, to correct your faults, to acquire merit. The commandments, beatitudes and maxims of the Gospel are our mirror.

3. *To reform.* What is the use of knowing your faults if you do not correct them? or of learning your duty, if you do not fulfil it? All sin is hateful, because it offends God; all His commandments should be obeyed, because they are made known to us by His revelation. Let us live in accordance with them.

III. **The Word of God will be our judge.** Our Lord says: *Qui non accepit verba mea, habet qui judicet eum; sermo quem locutus sum ille judicabit eum* (John xii. 48).

1. *Sentence of abandonment.* The sun's rays and the dew penetrate everywhere, but do not meet with the same soil in every case. So it is with the Word of God; some criticize it, others are touched by it; others forget it. Many will hear the sentence: *Auferetur a vobis regnum Dei.*

2. *Sentence of comparison.* How many unbelievers would have been converted, how many indifferent Christians would have improved, if they had possessed your knowledge of the Gospel! How many would have become saints, had they been circumstanced

as you are! Compare your knowledge of religion with your practice of it!

3. *Sentence of conviction.* Many will plead ignorance at the day of judgment, but they could easily have gained information about Christianity. Many will say that they have forgotten what they learnt, but they would not have done so, had they gone on practicing what they had been taught. Others will say that their hindrances were too great, but people can fulfil their social obligations without neglecting prayer, Holy Mass and Holy Communion.

Peroration. God said by the prophet Isaias (lv. 11): *Verbum meum non revertetur ad me vacuum.* Be on your guard; listen, reflect upon and practice it. In this way you will attain to peace and salvation.

Alternative Plan

The Word of God

"The Word of God speaks in the Gospel to teach, to reprove, to correct and to instruct in justice."—2 Tim. iii. 16.

1. **To teach.** Our generation boasts that this is the age of enlightenment, progress, scientific knowledge and civilization; but God is supreme, and His Word is necessary to mankind. The world discusses and argues, its knowledge claims to be of supreme importance, there is no end to man's industry in research, unrestricted liberty of speech causes antagonism in family life and between different classes, error and calumny darken men's intellect, one party abuses another, home life becomes a burden and a hungry rabble causes disturbance.

But the Word of God *teaches.* Coming as it does from the eternal truth and divine justice, it gives uprightness to the conscience, strength to the character, light to the mind. It tells us what we ought to believe, know and do; it is our guide on earth, and shows us the way of salvation. Let us have recourse to the Word of God. It is far better than the wisdom of this world, wider than the whole range of human learning, it is the everlasting, intangible law. In it we find our duties,

comfort and unchanging hope—in it dogma, morality and outward worship.

II. **To correct and reprove sinners.** Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred (Eccle. ix. 1). Question yourselves: Have you never missed Mass, or your daily prayers? Have you never failed to observe the Friday abstinence or to make your Easter Communion? Have you never grumbled at, slandered or abused others or done them some harm? God's judgment is inevitable. Listen to His Word; it will overcome your indifference. It will crush the hardness of your heart, the harshness of your character, and your obstinacy in sin. Sinners abound, in spite of God's graces and the sacraments that He offers them. Turn away from sin, for God said to Ezechiel (iii. 19): *Si annuntiaveris impio, et ille non fuerit conversus ab impietate sua et a via sua impia, ipse in iniquitate sua morietur.*

III. **To perfect the righteous.** The Word of God is spirit and life. Men of every class have listened to it in every age. There have been holy kings and queens, such as St. Louis, holy beggars, such as St. Alexis, St. Roch, and B. Benoit-Labre; holy shepherds, such as St. Genevieve, St. Joan of Arc, St. Vincent de Paul; holy schoolboys, such as St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Stanislaus, St. John Berchmans; holy doctors, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Alphonsus Liguori; holy ploughmen, such as St. Fiacre and St. Isidore. It is our Lord's Word that has produced faithful and holy souls.

Peroration. You see then how the seed from heaven satisfies the hungry, gives strength to the weary and comfort to the laborers. Our Lord concludes: *Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat.* Let us both hear and practice what He tells us. Amen.

Quinquagesima

OUR LORD FORETELLS HIS PASSION

"Then Jesus took unto Him the twelve and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem."—Luke xviii. 31.

This gospel consist of two parts, our Lord's prediction of His Passion and death, and the cure of the blind man near

Jericho. The thought of our Lord on the cross should give us instruction, food for reflection and comfort.

I. **Instruction.** Amidst the turmoil of the present day the Church reminds us: *O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus* (Lam. i. 12). On the eve of our Lord's crucifixion the apostles forsook Him and fled. Those who are indifferent forsake Him now; those whose zeal is only feigned deny all knowledge of Him; those who sin betray Him: *Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam.* A blind fury, like that of the Jews, possesses some, who cry: "Away with Him!" or "Let Him die." Others give way to abominable insults, and resemble the men who put Him to death. The excesses of the present day are piercing thorns; foul language is like spittle in His face; reckless conversation scourges Him anew; intemperance is like gall and vinegar to Him; in indecent assemblies He is crucified again; corrupt hearts are so many crosses to Him.

II. **Food for reflection.** Isaias speaks of our Lord as saying: *Circumspexi et non erat auxiliator* (lxiii. 5). Let us defend Him, show zeal for Him, set a good example—*Qui non est mecum, contra me est.* By our zeal we can make satisfaction for sinners. We can console Him by never forsaking Him, even when He asks us: *Numquid et vos vultis abire?* His sufferings should make us cling to Him the more closely, so that He may say: "You are they who have continued with me in my temptations." Holy souls can disarm His justice and call forth His mercy; shall not we strive to do this? Let us say: *Ecce adsum, quid me vis facere?* (Acts ix. 6). A Christian can have no better occupation than to reflect over these things.

III. **Comfort.** The pleasures of sinners, as displayed in the excesses and vice of the present time, are *shameful,* since passion defiles both body and soul, and gives rise to disorders; they are *fleeting,* and are followed by remorse; they are *fraught with evil consequences.* The pleasures enjoyed by God's servants are *pure and holy,* resulting from peace of mind and God's grace, and they are increased by piety; they are *solid and lasting,* for they do not depend on any accidents of our daily life, nor are they subject to the caprice of this world, but they will be renewed in heaven at the last day; they are *precious and beneficial,* for they

expand our hearts, sustain us in the right way, sweeten our bitterness, render virtue more attractive, and their light will shine for ever.

The world and its delights will pass away; God alone will remain for ever. Let us cling to and serve Him.

Alternative Plan

Spiritual Blindness

***"A blind man sat by the wayside begging."*—Luke xviii. 35.**

The story of the blind man forms the second part of the gospel for Quinquagesima. To be physically blind is a misfortune in this world, but to be spiritually blind is a misfortune both in this world and the next. Spiritual blindness has three disastrous results: indifference to disorder, false excuses, deceptive calm.

I. **Indifference to disorder.** Men's eyes are blinded by the fire of passion and the smoke of evil pleasures, so that they do not see the sun of truth. Examine yourselves—you profess to be Christians—avoid extravagance, waste of time, dissipation. Be moderate, restrained and serious. Some kinds of amusement are permissible, and our reason tells us which they are, how much time we may devote to them, how important a part they may play in our lives; reason moderates their attraction for us and checks all excess. Do you follow the dictates of reason in this respect? What about your religion? Examine yourselves by the light of the beatitudes and the "Woes." Beware of the power of darkness. Remember the curse: *Fiat via eorum tenebrae et lubricum* (Ps. 34). The way of darkness is followed by sinners, who are spiritually blind.

II **False excuses.** David besought God to deliver him from making false excuses for sin. In extenuation of your guilt you plead that your sins are habitual. Such sins, being frequently committed, become great and even horrible, and you make light of them. St. Augustine says: "*Peccata, quamvis magna et horrenda, cum in consuetudinem venerunt, aut parva aut nulla esse falso creduntur.* What fatal blindness! Or you say that one

must not be overstrict, and so, in order to conform to the way of the world, you are so easygoing as to offend God, act contrary to your religion and risk the loss of your soul. Shun the company of sinners. Or you speak of the need of recreation. Certainly you must have recreation, but it need not be sinful nor an occasion of sin. St. John Chrysostom says that such recreations *non sunt ludibria sed crimina.*

III. **Deceptive calm.** The spiritually blind are capable of saying: *Cum inferno fecimus pactum* (Is. xxviii. 15). They flatter themselves that they can conceal the consequences of their actions, that they can commit sin and still remain good Christians. Nevertheless three consequences always follow sin—it stains the soul, it causes danger of condemnation, and it brings remorse when too late. Men indulge themselves in every way, and mean to amend later on. In Holy Scripture we read that there is a time for laughter and a time for tears, a time to work and a time for rest, but we are not told that there is a time for sin. Evil cannot ever be made into a virtue. Some intend to abandon sin definitely in Lent, or at the time of a mission or retreat, until they fall again.

Ye who are in spiritual blindness, ye are condemned by God's light; His grace is calling to you, He offers to cure you in His mercy. Examine yourselves and pray.

First Sunday in Lent

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert."—Matt. iv. 1.

The Church is our Lord's representative on earth; the devil is always laying snares for her, but she continues to teach His doctrine. She inculcates dogma, morality and the worship of God, and these correspond to our Lord's answers to the tempter.

I. **Dogma.** The devil said: "Command that these stones become bread." He desired false doctrines to pass for the solid truths that are the support of men's mind and intellect. Our Saviour replied: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in

every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Human doctrines are not enough, we need the revealed Word of God. Hence there can be only one true religion. This revelation forms the doctrine or dogmatic teaching that we are required to believe. It proceeds from God, was taught by the apostles, and the Church hands it on to each successive generation. It is still preached, and is as necessary as ever at the present time.

II. **Morality.** The devil said: "If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down," and went on to quote Holy Scripture. This is how heretics and bad Christians argue, deceiving the multitude and altering the true meaning. Our Saviour replied: "It is written again: thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The Church can refute heresy by means of Holy Scripture, for she knows the true meaning of it and determines what is really the law of God. The devil tries to suggest certain actions or courses of conduct, but the moral teaching of the Church regulates our behavior. In our Lord's case the devil suggested a rash act that would have amounted to suicide, had no miracle been worked. The Church teaches us that God is the source of grace, but forbids us to tempt Him.

III. **The Worship of God.** The devil said: "All these things will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." Paganism denied God, and many people have no religion and cling to nothing but the good things of this life. Heresies rob God of the honor due to Him and diminish His worship. Our Saviour answered: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and him only shalt thou serve." The Church teaches us that divine worship uplifts our souls, promotes our sanctification and prepares us for heaven. We may pray in private or in public, God is the Master of each and all. Satan was ordered to be gone. The Church has ever maintained purity of doctrine, morals and worship. Think of her struggles, councils, decrees and of her many martyrs.

At last angels came and ministered to Jesus. There are always faithful servants of God, myriads of true Christians, faith never dies out, and the Church continues her work of civilizing and sanctifying mankind.

Alternative Plan

Our Lord's Temptation

"Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert."—Matt. *iv.* v.

It behooves us to expect attacks from the devil and to know how to resist them.

I. **We must expect attacks.** Our nature is corrupted by original sin, and Satan, the enemy of God and of our souls, is sure to try to overthrow our good resolutions.

What is the devil?—a pure spirit, a fallen angel, whose attacks assail us because he is a spirit, a spirit of wickedness, as St. Paul calls him (Ephes. vi. 12). An earthly foe exhausts his strength as time goes on, but Satan never wearies and never dies. He calls himself legion, for his deceits are infinite, his snares surround us, his opportunities abound, and he has many devils under him. He is a stubborn spirit, who detests God and His creatures, His work of redemption, souls created in God's likeness, redeemed by His precious Blood, firmly established in His Church and destined for heaven.

How did the devil tempt our Lord? Our Saviour had not at that time revealed Himself by miracles, but the devil, knowing the Scriptures, had a suspicion that He might be the Messias. . . . (1) After fasting for forty days, hunger naturally made itself felt, but Jesus forbore to work a miracle. Let us learn from Him to refrain even from lawful acts, if they are suggested by a bad motive. Bread and all earthly possessions are of less value than God's grace and favors. (2) The devil set our Lord on a pinnacle of the Temple. Success flatters our pride; let us beware of reckless and imprudent actions. Satan might have thrown our Lord down himself, but he feared the angels of whom he spoke. Let us never make any decision at the suggestion of evil. To do so would involve sin and cause us to tempt God. (3) The devil carried our Lord to the top of a mountain. Ambition satisfied by means of the craft and wicked deeds of the devil can do us no good. Jesus exclaimed: "Begone, Satan!" To serve God

is better than to gain the whole world. *Quid si mundum universum lucretur . . .*

Notice that the first temptation arose out of the need of food, "the struggle for life"; the second called for an act of diabolical daring; the third involved apostasy. Men begin with some specious excuse, and end with mortal sin.

II. **We must know how to resist the devil.** There are three stages in each temptation—the suggestion, the evil pleasure taken in it, the consent given to it. Likewise there are three corresponding remedies—not to listen to it, to avoid known occasions of temptation, not to parley with it.

We should fear temptation because it abounds in perils, frequently occurs and may have disastrous consequences. We should know how to derive benefit from it, as it ought to be a reason for humility, a ground for vigilance and an opportunity of gaining merit; and we should resist it with confidence, courage and perseverance.

Peroration. Do not follow the example of those who deny the reality of temptations, of careless men, who pay no attention to them, of reckless persons who laugh at them, or of presumptuous fools, who despise them. Acknowledge their reality, but be on your guard and overcome them by the help of God's grace. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent

THE TRANSFIGURATION

"Jesus taketh . . . Peter and James and John."—Matt. xvii. 1.

The time of the Passion was at hand, and the faith of the apostles might waver when they witnessed the horrors of Calvary. They had seen our Lord's miracles, now He desired them to behold the manifestation of His divinity.

Two points: our Lord's actions, the apostles' words.

I. **Our Lord's actions.** He chose out three of the apostles, not through favoritism, for He knew the hearts and future zeal of them all. So ought we to distinguish among our friends; a religious spirit should underlie our choice, and

charity be the bond and mutual salvation the end of it. (2) He led them up a mountain. Heights both material and intellectual are well suited for the exchange of confidences and noble projects. Noe's Ark stopped on the summit of a mountain; Abraham went up to offer his sacrifice; Moses received the law; our Lord was crucified. Let us lift up our eyes to Thabor. (3) He was transfigured both in face and clothing, and Moses and Elias appeared talking with Him. They represented the law and the prophets, whose place was to be taken by the Gospel. *Hic est Filius meus. Ipsum audite.* Thus there was a divine revelation in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, and His Gospel is greater than the Old Testament; He completed and replaced all the messengers sent forth by God in previous ages. Thenceforth He alone is to be heard—*Ipsum audite.* The followers of Moses should recognize Him whom he foretold; the students of the prophets should welcome Him whom they predicted; and men of good faith, no matter what form of religion they profess, should acknowledge Him to be the Word of God.

II. **The apostles' words.** At first they exclaimed in amazement: "It is good for us to be here." Then they proposed to make three tabernacles. The supernatural is of surpassing beauty and our souls are roused to enthusiasm by divine grace, prayer and the Holy Eucharist. But we must not lay too much stress upon sensible devotion. A bright cloud overshadowed them. Sin and the devil plunge the soul into darkness, but God is light and is always present, even when unseen, but His Word never passes away. The apostles fell prostrate; trials often crush us down to the earth, but we must lift up our hearts, and, whatever may befall, we must be true to Jesus. Moses and Elias vanished, but He remains; hear Him. His teaching and miracles, Thabor and Calvary, all prove His divinity; His grace uplifts and sanctifies us, and our own broken hearts lead us back to Him.

The apostles went down from the mountain, full of faith and consolation. Let us go back to our daily life, being like them strengthened and comforted, and resolved to live under the eye of God.

Alternative Plan

Amendment of Life

"He was transfigured before them."—Matt. xvii. 2.

Lent ought to effect our spiritual transfiguration, so that we may come to our Lord in our Easter Communion. We live in the midst of professing Christians, and ought to set our neighbors a good example. Three points to consider—in what respects we need amendment, the reasons for seeking it, and the help that we receive.

I. **How do we need amendment?** No one is perfect; each of us must confess that he commits many sins. We ought to amend especially our thoughts, affections and actions. (1) *Our thoughts.* Many false ideas are current in this world. The spirit of God places the supernatural, faith, grace, virtue and honor, above all earthly delights. What is great in the sight of men is often trivial, false and evil in the sight of God. (Refer to the Beatitudes—Matt. v.). (2) *Our affections.* We cling to worldly pleasures that are fraught with bitterness; we shrink from penance that sanctifies our souls; we worry about things that are unworthy of attention; we forget that our bodies must decay and that our souls are destined for true glory. Let us fix our affections on the things that are of the highest niterest. (3) *Our actions.* False maxims will lead us to ruin, so let us turn to the truth. When we ourselves have changed for the better, our actions will be those of Christians.

II. **Reasons for amendment.** There are three chief reasons: our own advantage, loyalty, and the edification of others. (1) We recognize God's rights, we know the teaching of the Church, and our duty as Christians. . . . If we infringe upon God's rights, we injure our souls mortally. *Horrendum est incidere in manus Dei viventis* (Hebr. x. 31). (2) We often make promises and forget them; were they sincere? Therefore let us be faithful to our word that we have pledged. (3) Many persons are afraid to amend lest people should make remarks about them and call them pious. Would they be

ashamed of being regarded as better husbands, more honest men, kinder neighbors? No. Why then should they not be better Christians? Our Lord bids us let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matt. v. 16).

III. **The help that we receive.** God helps us to amend by means of the sacraments, prayer and watchfulness.

(1) *The Sacraments.* (a) Penance. In Confession we see what calls for amendment; absolution removes the guilt of past sin; satisfaction enables us to make reparation. (b) The Holy Eucharist. Our Saviour is really present; He is the living bread of our souls, the pledge of our salvation, the source of true strength; He is "God with us."

(2) *Prayer* does four things: raises our souls towards God, offers Him our worship, reveals our needs, asks His graces. It is indeed a powerful aid to amendment. Let us ask our Lord to teach us how to pray.

(3) *Watchfulness.* In the darkness of failure and trial, be on your guard. When occasions of sin present themselves, be careful to avoid them. Be vigilant in the fulfilment of your promises. *Vigilate et orate*—these are our Saviour's words and sum up all our duty.

Peroration. All these considerations convince us of our need for amendment; let us resolve firmly to turn away from our evil ways.

Third Sunday in Lent

THE CURE OF THE MAN POSSESSED OF A DEVIL

"He cast out a devil and the same was dumb."—Luke xi. 14.

We might learn many lessons from the details given in this gospel, but they may be collected under three headings: the miracle itself, the blasphemy of the bystanders, the relapse into sin.

I. **The miracle itself.** There was no malady that Jesus did not cure. To-day we read that a man possessed of a dumb

devil was brought to Him. Twofold misfortune—the devil is an implacable foe, and dumbness prevents prayer and confession. The cure that our Lord effected was (a) miraculous in its nature, (b) prompt in its effect, (c) public; and an enthusiastic crowd applauded it. (Enlarge upon these three features.) A sinner is like the man possessed, for he belongs to the devil, his works are without merit, and death would make him Satan's subject for ever. He is dumb; he cannot pray, cares nothing for Sunday, nor for the sacraments, nor does he ever think of his soul; he speaks only to men like himself.

Examine yourselves and beg God to cure you.

II. **The blasphemy of the bystanders.** The miracle was a startling one, but our Lord's enemies, the Pharisees, ascribed it to His connection with the prince of devils. This was horrible blasphemy and at the same time absurd, as a crowd of people had witnessed the miracle. At the present day it is the fashion to deny all miracles, and Pharisees and unbelievers continue to blaspheme. Our Lord pointed out the contradiction involved in their accusation; how could Satan exist, if he cast himself out? He drew attention to the unfairness of their judgment, for when He had sent forth the apostles in twos, they also wrought miracles, and they were Jews like the Pharisees. He showed that their argument was illogical, for since they could not deny His power, they had recourse to subterfuges. The enemies of the Church, the clergy and good works often employ the same three methods against them.

III. **The relapse into sin.** "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest, and not finding." A man, who has been converted, has perhaps no anxiety and does not pray, but the devil is restless, and at last resolves to return to his house whence he came out. He regards the man's soul as still belonging to him; was the conversion genuine? Accordingly he returns and finds the house swept and garnished. Either he finds that the man is sincere in his conversion, or he detects a weak spot. In any case he is sure of prevailing sooner or later.

"He goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself." Be on your guard, for whilst you are still only beginners in the Christian life, you will encounter many temptations to fall back into sin, and these will weaken your resolutions. Be not discouraged, but fear the "worse state" that would result from a relapse into sin—the frequency of such sins—the difficulty in rising again after sin, the ease with which we fall into it, and the illusions which conceal its real malice and danger.

Alternative Plan

Conversion and Relapse into Sin

"The last state of that man becomes worse than the first."—Luke xi. 26.

The cure of the man possessed by a devil is a type of a true conversion—the miracle has been worked by the grace of God, but people who are indifferent and without faith speak against religion and mock at conversion, and the devil provides many opportunities for backsliding. Two points: the easiness of relapse, the difficulty of recovery.

I. The easiness of relapse. A man may be converted and for a time form good resolutions, without having real piety. Therefore he ought to fear a relapse into sin, for the devil is a stubborn enemy and never lays aside his weapons; his hatred remains alive, and his attacks are incessant, however much you may strengthen your resolutions. For one day perhaps he leaves you alone, but he cannot rest and wishes to come back, being jealous of your peace of mind. He wishes to come back and regards your soul as his own property still, for you used to belong to him. He says: "I will return into my house." You were made God's children at your baptism, you have received His sacraments, but the devil considers you to be still at his disposal, on account of your former sins, and he reckons upon your falling again. He finds that you have made good resolutions, say your prayers and lead a better life, but he notices that you are devoid of enthusiasm and perhaps rather astonished at not being already discouraged. His task will be easy enough.

II. **The difficulty of recovery.** A fall into sin is intelligible, but a relapse into it makes another conversion more difficult, because the first devil calls in others to help him. There are two reasons for this: there are many different kinds of sin, and God's mercy is replaced by His justice. According to the Doctors of the Church, the seven spirits, more wicked than the first, represent the following sins:

Infidelity to grace and to the practice of virtue.

Ingratitude to God, who in His mercy, forgave all former sins.

Disregard of promises made and benefits received.

Presumption and carelessness regarding the soul's welfare.

Bad habits, which prevent us from even seeing our sins.

Persistence in evil, which plunges us deeper into sin and makes us take delight in it.

Despair when death approaches and reminds us of our shortcomings.

We ought to regard sin as a burden or fetter; when we multiply our sins, we render our conversion almost impossible. God's grace is all powerful, but it cannot act when it is thwarted by the continance of our sins. When our lips cease to move in prayer and our hands refrain from good works, mercy disappears and justice takes its place. Careless Communions, presumption, recklessness in heaping sin upon sin—these all bring us within danger of condemnation. Let us stir up within our hearts the spirit of faith, cry out to God with hope and contrition, and return to the practice of virtue.

Peroration. O God, Thy mercy is greater than our offences, send forth upon us Thy grace to lift us up, that we may love and serve Thee better in future. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES

"After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee."—John vi. 1.

Our Lord's miracles prove His power, but were the outcome of His charity. He worked them in answer to the faith

of some individual, or to the confidence of many, or that He might satisfy the needs of a large number of persons. He had pity on the multitude. In to-day's gospel we may notice particularly our needs, resources and duties.

I. **Our needs.** The multitude followed our Lord, listening to His words, but He remembered that they had nothing to eat. We consist of body and soul, and require two distinct kinds of food . . . The crowd experienced the truth of Christ's words: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke iv. 4). After feeding their souls with His doctrine, He intended to work a miracle to supply their bodily needs. You have enough material bread, but do you think sufficiently of your spiritual food? How many people forget it altogether! The chapter that contains the account of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves, contains also the promise of the holy Eucharist, the bread of our souls. Come to your Easter Communion.

II. **Our resources.** Our Lord often healed sick persons, lepers and cripples, but on this occasion none of these were present, and the multitude needed one thing only, namely bread, and Jesus supplied it. In the order of grace man has many needs, all of which are satisfied by God. In baptism we become His children, in the Sacrament of Penance we are raised from our sins, His doctrine enlightens our intellect, His commandments direct our will and conscience, the holy Eucharist is the food of our spiritual life. Jesus says to His Church: "Make them sit down." Our religion gives us certainty regarding divine truth and enables us to stand firm in the true faith. He bids the Church "Gather up the fragments that remain." These were to serve as provision for the night and the homeward journey. The holy Eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle, so that we may come and pray there or receive it as our Viaticum. There were twelve apostles and twelve baskets. Wherever there is a minister of the Church, there are also our Lord's doctrine and charity.

III. **Our duties.** After being thus miraculously fed, the people felt reverence and confidence—(a) reverence, because they perceived Jesus to be the Messias. When we receive

favors from God, let us examine ourselves, worship Him, avoid sin, repent of past offences, humble and test ourselves. Thus we shall show true and practical reverence. (b) Confidence. Jesus had shown His pity and foresight when He asked: "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" The apostles sorrowfully confessed that they had only five loaves, but these were enough. We have received instruction, let us arouse within our hearts confidence to give life to our faith, increase our love, inflame our desire, and inspire us with gratitude. Our Lord's charity is inexhaustible, for He says to the Church: "Distribute my graces to them, giving to each as much as he wishes."

Peroration. Let us learn to go to Jesus, to follow Him and listen to His words; He will give us the bread of heaven to be our food for ever. Amen.

Alternative Plan

God's Providence and its Ministers

"A great multitude followed Him."—John vi. 2.

We have to-day a gospel in which God reveals His care of us. In the multiplication of the loaves, our Lord is Providence and the apostles are His instruments. This is a most interesting and important doctrine.

I. **Our Lord is here divine Providence.** If God did not supply our needs, we might impute it to ignorance, indifference or inability on His part. (a) Jesus cannot be ignorant, for He both saw and noticed; *cum sublevasset oculos Jesus, et vidisset.* (b) His heart was full of compassion: *Misertus est super eos.* (c) He had power to do anything and made use of what was most accessible: *Accepit ergo panes.* God perceives our needs. In Psalm 33 we read: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just . . . but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things (vs. 16, 17). "I sleep," where evil is concerned, "but my heart watcheth" to reward the just. Our Lord saw how the multitude ran after Him, He tested them for three days, and

questioned St. Philip only to try him, for "He Himself knew what He would do." Sinners should find here ground for reflection, and the just will discover consolation. God loves us so much as to provide for us. Everything comes from Him; He is concerned about everything, and all human beings belong to His family. All the trials, sufferings and accidents of life are known to Him; none of our good works escape His notice: *Colligite fragmenta ne percant.* Our Lord raised His eyes to heaven and drew down grace; He let them rest upon the multitude, and poured out His mercy upon them. God can do all things; He forbids us to trouble about temporal things. The multitude listened to our Lord for three days without any food, and expected to go home hungry. . . . Let us be neither indolent nor distrustful. Jesus bids us seek first the kingdom of God and His justice (Matt. vi. 33).

II. **The apostles were the ministers of God's Providence.** God makes laws, but carries out His designs through secondary causes. Our Lord intended to work a miracle. Nevertheless He consulted His apostles: "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" From them He received the material on which He worked the miracle; He took the loaves. Moreover He employed the apostles in order to carry out His design. This is the order established by God; there are ministers of His providence. In the Church these are the shepherds of souls. In civil life there are kings and rulers. To maintain order and defend our country we have an army; to execute justice we have magistrates. But God is supreme over all; He will judge the measures taken by His representatives. The rich are commissioned by God to relieve the poor and dispense His gifts to them, just as our Lord commissioned the disciples to distribute the miraculous bread to the multitude. Some rich people say, like St. Philip: "We have no money." Our Lord gave no answer to this remark, and the bread was multiplied nevertheless.

Peroration. There are many important lessons to be learnt from these considerations. . . . God's Providence never fails either the poor who stand in need of help, or the wealthy who supply it to them. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY

OUR DIVINE LORD AND HIS ENEMIES

"Jesus said to the Jews: 'Which of you shall convince me of sin?'"—JOHN viii. 46.

Our Lord was face to face with His enemies. He had worked miracles to prove the truth of His doctrine and His own sanctity and divinity, but the scribes and Pharisees declared that He was possessed, and, giving way to their fury, tried to stone Him. Let us consider two things: Our Lord wished to convince His enemies, and holy Church desires to bring back sinners.

I. **Our Lord and His enemies.** Jesus had been teaching the multitude. "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God." Instead of examining themselves, the Jews began to insult Him: "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil." Our Lord answered: "I have not a devil, but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. . . . Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever." He pointed out what was to their spiritual advantage, but they persisted in their assertion that He had a devil, adding that His doctrine could not ensure immortality in this world, since Abraham had died. They asked: "Art thou greater than Abraham . . . and the prophets?" "Whom dost thou make thyself?" In reply He referred to the traditional belief regarding the Messias, emphasizing chiefly the testimony of His heavenly Father, His own fidelity to God's word, Abraham's desire to see the Messias, the fulfilment of this desire. The Jews adopted another line of argument, and answered that He was not yet born when Abraham lived, and consequently could not have seen him. Our Lord, however, spoke of Himself as the eternal Son of God. The Jews tried to stone Him. (Serious reflections.)

II. **Holy Church and sinners.** Sinners and all who are our Lord's enemies resemble the Pharisees. The Church preaches

the Word of God, and upright souls, that are of God, hear her and learn truths to enlighten their understanding, commandments to guide their conduct, and their Easter duty for their sanctification. But Christ's enemies attack the Church, and declare that she does not belong to the present century, and that they will have nothing to do with her. She replies: "I am the source of holiness and serve God, whereas you have gone astray from the right path. I do not preach for my own sake; the day will come when God will convince you of your error. The pleasures and good things of this world will pass away; have recourse to God's law in order to save your souls." Careless people answer that the Church knows nothing about the enjoyments of life, that honesty and loyalty are no safeguards against poverty and death, and that no pleasures can be derived from her theories. But the Church appeals to the testimony of revelation, the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies, the conversion of the world, and the persistence of evangelical sanctity in every age. The wicked retort that they refuse to think of anything beyond the present life, and will not listen to the Church. Yet she continues to be the guardian of divine truth. They may try to overwhelm, persecute and destroy her, but their blindness results in their complete defeat.

Peroration. On which side will you take up your stand? You have to fufil the Easter precept. Show yourselves to be true Christians.

Alternative Plan

The Easter Precept

"He that is of God, heareth the word of God."—John viii. 47.

We are within a fortnight of Easter, and it behooves us to fulfil an important duty, viz., to confess our sins and receive our Lord in Holy Communion. Every upright man does his duty in ordinary life, and we must do ours in religion. Two

considerations regarding this duty: its nature and its obligation.

I. **The nature of our Easter duty.** Our Lord has told us that unless we do penance, we shall perish. Unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, we have no life in us. Many things impress this duty upon us. God who imposes it has a right to do so. He calls us: *Venite ad me omnes.* The true interests of our souls urge us to do our duty, because our souls come from God and need a higher life. As Christians, admitted to the sacraments and destined for heaven, we should not be negligent. Many things remind us of our Easter duty. Lent is a time for reflection and penance, Passiontide calls us to think of our Lord's Passion, the Church appeals to us again and again, our prayers should be more fervent, our confessions more thorough, our life more worthy of our Christian profession. Men talk a great deal of their rights, but God has rights over us, to which we are bound to submit. This is a solemn duty, for it is a debt that we owe to God—Christ—the Church—our sanctification—our souls, mode of life as Christians, eternity.

II. **The obligation of our Easter duty.** It is the greatest of all benefits, because it unites us with God in a holy manner, gives us the chief of all the sacraments, and is the most powerful means of restoring and preserving the state of grace. We are bidden to approach the sacraments at the holiest season in the year. Easter is a time for recollection, a time for making satisfaction for sin and for gaining merit, and a time for mutual edification. The whole Church takes up the Easter Alleluia. No one is dispensed from this duty; it is binding upon all, though the wicked refuse and the careless neglect to fulfil it. Some refuse for no particular reason, because they will not take the trouble to understand their duty and prepare themselves; others make false excuses, and plead want of time, etc.; others are hypocritical, because they fear to confess their secret sins.

PALM SUNDAY

EASTER COMMUNION

"Hosanna . . . Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."—MATT. xxi. 9.

The Hebrews in their joy raised the cry "Hosanna," and for nearly 2000 years the Church too has repeated it. In a few days the multitude was to shout *Crucifigatur,* but to-day let us sing *Hosanna* in anticipation of our Easter Communion. In the triumphal procession were faithful disciples and hypocritical Pharisees.

I. **The Disciples** (1) celebrated their Master's triumph; (2) walked in front of Him; (3) carried branches of palm; (4) strewed their garments on the way—a type of the communion of the just. The disciples, their friends and the multitude organized this triumphal entry—and a good Communion is a triumph. Are you of the number of those who make a good Communion at Easter? If you are our Lord's friends and disciples, you must be in the state of grace. Go to confession. They walked in front of their Master. In the same way you ought not to delay but to make preparation. How necessary such preparation is in the case of those who are too careless to come every year! Prayers, mortification, good works, etc. When we expect a friend or any grandee, we make preparations.

The disciples carried branches of palm and olive. The palm is the symbol of victory; be victorious, therefore, over three things: *sin,* that causes the death of the soul; the *world,* whose example has led you astray; and *yourselves,* for your cowardice has caused you to commit many sins. The olive is the symbol of peace. Come and talk with God, for He is full of mercy. The disciples strewed their garments on the way. Branches did not suffice; they wanted to give more, to sacrifice themselves. Therefore put aside superfluities, aimless conversations, works devoid of merit; sacrifice them to our Lord. O Lord, *sana me et sanabor* (Jerem. xvii. 14).

II. **The Pharisees.** Here again we may notice four points. They welcomed our Lord through human respect; they were intending to conspire against Him; they disputed His miracles; they soon after put Him to death. So great was the enthusiasm shown by the multitude, that the Pharisees dared not protest against it, so they decided to take part in it. At first their curiosity made them pretend to be devoted followers of Christ. Some Christians hate the duty of Easter Communion, but nevertheless they fulfil it, because they dread public opinion.

The Pharisees were thinking how they could conspire against Jesus. A multitude is fickle, and rumors judiciously spread might cause men to modify their opinions. In the same way some people wish to destroy the fruit of the sacrament, and to set aside all the obligations that they have incurred. Passions and excesses crucify our Lord anew.

The Pharisees disputed His miracles. Holy Communion is designed to produce certain beneficial results, but men's perverse dispositions thwart this design. In this way they deny and contradict these results, whilst other Christians are sanctified by a really good Communion.

Finally the Pharisees put our Lord to death. "Deep calleth on deep" (Ps. 41, 8). By multiplying their sins men bring about their spiritual death and crucify again to themselves the Son of God (Hebr. vi. 6). Would it not then be better to refrain altogether from Holy Communion? No, for nothing forces you to make a bad Communion; on the contrary, we have every encouragement to make a good and fruitful Communion.

Peroration. O God, on the day of our Easter Communion we will sing Hosanna in honor of Thy triumph. Away with partial preparation and halfhearted repentance. Well is it for souls that really love and serve God; they will triumph for ever with Him in heaven. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Devotion to the Passion

"The Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified."—Matt. xxvi. 2.

This is the great week, the Holy Week par excellence, when we have exceptional ceremonies and mournful chants, and when the heart of every Christian is filled with sorrow. But the day of our redemption is at hand, the fulfilment of all the prophecies, the last stage in our Lord's mortal life, for He is about to be betrayed and handed over to His enemies, most cruelly treated and crucified. No subject for meditation can be more pleasing to God and more beneficial to man than the Passion of Christ.

I. **It is the subject most pleasing to God.** In the Gospels we read that our Lord often spoke of the Passion to His apostles; the sword of sorrow was always present in our Lady's thoughts; the apostles preached Christ crucified, the saints never lost sight of the Passion and regarded meditation upon it as the most efficacious means of sanctification. Hence we may conclude that it is most pleasing to God.

The suffering and death of our Lord were foretold by David, Isaias and Jeremias. He Himself supplied the details: *Tradetur, illudetur, conspuetur, flagellabitur, occident eum et tertia die resurget.* The evangelists repeat the story and the early Christians were reminded of it frequently in the epistles. And we still continue to preach Christ crucified.

In the Church, every saint has meditated upon the Passion, two religious congregations, the Redemptorists and the Passionists are particularly devoted to it, and we all dwell upon it in the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

II. **It is the subject most beneficial to man.** It causes us to turn away from sin. In the wilderness the brazen serpent foreshadowed the cross. Our Lord made atonement for every sin and vice (give instances); hence, as St. Augustine says: *Haec medicina hominum tanta est, quanta non potest cogitari.* Meditation on the Passion inclines us to do right. How many

virtues may we learn from the sacred Passion and cross of our Lord! Every one of them has been practised . . . every poor sufferer may there find his own affliction and draw thence consolation; there he has an example to follow. (Develop this thought.)

Peroration. Turn therefore to the cross, sinners and righteous alike. Remember who it is who hangs there, think for whom He suffers and how intense His agony must be; reflect upon His feelings, and make good resolutions. Amen.

Easter Sunday

THE HOLY WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHRE

"Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus."—Mark xvi. 1.

The *Alleluia* of the Resurrection is the cry of joy at our Lord's triumph. It should likewise mark the joy of a soul that has returned to God's grace by means of the Easter Communion. Let us study the details of this gospel and derive some practical lessons from it.

I. **When the Sabbath was past** the holy women bought their perfumes, that is to say, it was at 6 o'clock on Saturday evening. Their zeal would have prompted them to do so earlier, but their well-regulated piety constrained them to keep the Sabbath holy. Works of supererogation take the second place. If they had waited until the next day, they might have been late in coming to the sepulchre. Have you ever put off coming to Christ and restoring your souls to the state of grace? Mary Magdalen came first . . . she had at one time been stained with sin, but had afterwards repented. Was your confession accompanied by contrition and satisfaction?

II. **"Very early in the morning, the first day of the week,** they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen." They possessed courage, as well as well-regulated piety. At daybreak their first thought was to go and embalm Jesus. After your souls have been in the darkness of sin, do you say: "I

will arise and go to my Father?" Is the first thing that you do on awakening in the morning to make the Sign of the Cross?

Jesus was the hope of Israel, and they were going to His sepulchre, and did not lose courage. With the death of your souls in prospect, do you decide upon doing good works? When your plans are frustrated, do you lift up your eyes to God? The day had hardly dawned, when the holy women started on their way—a generous follower of Christ sets to work at once, as soon as God's will is made clear to him, and he will not lose his reward.

III. **"The women said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"**

They walked quickly, and the difficulty that they foresaw did not hinder them. They showed constancy and resolution, whereas others might have said that it was useless to go on, seeing that the stone was sealed and guards stationed.

We should always go forward boldly, when we know some course of action to be right, and our zeal and sense of duty urge us to follow it. Hesitation on our part only strengthens our enemies. We have sins to overcome and virtues to practice, and we can do all things in Him who strengtheneth us (Phil. iv. 13). The women arrived at daybreak . . . at the outset of our life as Christians we receive faith, hope and charity. Let us go forward boldly; God will be with us.

IV. **"And looking they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great."** The stone was great; obstacles ought not to discourage us; we shall make no real progress without exertion; the saints overcame the world and the snares of Satan. God can remove difficulties. We are helped by His grace, our guardian angels, the good examples of others. "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii. 31.) Men may rebel against Him, but none can resist Him, and He is the Lord of life and death. The sealed stone and the guards were nothing to Him.

V. **"Entering into the sepulchre,** they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe; and they were astonished." There was no dead body there, but an

angel. They did not expect the Resurrection, and were alarmed at what they beheld. The angel Gabriel, *Fortitudo Dei,* was face to face with them. We read of him in many places in Holy Scripture; he appeared to Daniel, Zachary, our Lady, St. Joseph, our Lord Himself in the Garden of Gethsemani, and the apostles at His ascension. The angel sat on the right side in the place of honor, as befitted one who is the Strength of God. His white robe typified the heavenly brightness of angelic spirits. Do we go straight to God? Have we recourse to His grace, the interpreters of His power and holy Church?

VI. **The angel "saith to them: Be not affrighted."**

Some people dread the supernatural; but whatever comes from heaven must inevitably be greater than what is human—there is no reason to be alarmed at it, nor at unforeseen events. . . . The empty tomb was the material proof of our Lord's resurrection. The supernatural should fill us with zeal. The angel bade the women carry the news to the disciples and Peter, and we, by our way of life ought to make known to our neighbors the benefits that we receive from God, and be a source of edification to the Church. The holy women were to remind the disciples that their Master had kept His word; let us, too, keep the promises that we have made at our baptism and Communions.

Peroration. The thoughts of men may be good, but we ought always to refer to God, and "seek the things that are above" (Col. iii. 1); in this way we shall rise to God and heaven.

Alternative Plan

Easter Communion

In spite of the outcry raised by the Jews, our Saviour rose again; and He lives on, in spite of the opposition of the State. Although His tomb had been sealed and guarded, He came forth—*Resurrexit sicut dixit, Alleluia.*

To-day we will not think of what happened at Calvary, nearly

2000 years ago, but we will rather meditate on the twofold lesson of Easter. This is for us the feast of a double resurrection, the remembrance of which fills the heart of every priest with joy and hope—namely, the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, and the resurrection of the souls of men.

I. **Our Lord's resurrection.** Two days ago we read how a traitor betrayed Jesus, the cowardly apostles forsook Him, an infuriated mob clamored for His death, the rulers in their hatred and weakness gave Him over to His enemies—this was the triumph of the powers of darkness and wickedness, and the climax of man's guilt.

In the evening our Lord's body was laid in a sepulchre hollowed out of the rock; the stone in front of it was sealed and guards were stationed, and the sentry kept watch. What possibility was there of escape? Our Lord's friends, the apostles, had hidden away, fearing and expecting the moment when they too would be arrested. In their weakness, alarm and discouragement they could do nothing in face of the precautions taken to secure the tomb, and everything imaginable had been done by magistrates, priests, the Roman procurator and the king himself in order to retain the body in the sepulchre. All at once, early on the Sunday morning, a rumor spread that Christ had risen again. Men hurried to and fro and heard the same report everywhere. How was it possible? Had the guards been faithless to their trust? If so, they would suffer the death penalty. No, they had seen Jesus leaning on His cross, surrounded by rays of glorious light, with divine majesty stamped upon His whole figure and His garments shining brightly, and they were terrified at this unexpected sight. Then they watched and saw Him, still resplendent, vanish from their sight; the stone of the sepulchre was rolled back, and within lay the winding sheet and linen cloths. The guards did not wait to be relieved, but departed at once, telling everyone that Christ had risen. "Be silent," said the rulers, magistrates, priests and governors; "Be silent," or at least say that the apostles came and bribed you, or that they took the body away whilst you were asleep. Here, take this money. But it was in vain; the guards and the people

continued to proclaim that Christ was risen. Everywhere they went to and fro, and the words: "He is risen" were heard at each street corner.

Was it surprising? Our Lord Himself had often spoken of His resurrection. Amidst the enthusiasm on Palm Sunday He had said that He would be put to death and would rise on the third day. He had restored health or even life to the sick, the dying and the dead. He, the sovereign Lord of all, used His divine power in the case of others to show His ability to use it in His own case. He raised Lazarus to life, after he had been dead four days, and why should He not rise again on the morning of the third day? Not long afterwards the holy women arrived with their perfumes, and found the guards gone and the tomb open. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, and, when she had carried the news to the Cenacle that she had seen her Master, Peter summoned up his courage, and he and John ran to the sepulchre, only to find it empty and to see the linen cloths folded. An angel from heaven testified to them the truth of the resurrection. This divine resurrection is the type of our own; that of our bodies at the last day, and that of our souls to renewed spiritual life even in this world.

II. **The resurrection of the sinner.** A man may have had evil tendencies in his heart, and his sins may have destroyed the life of grace within his soul, where bad habits, passions and delight in wickedness reigned supreme, whilst all around were bad examples, harmful advice continually reached his ears, and his favorite companions possessed neither conscience nor faith. The devil was always on the watch, wicked men regarded him as one of themselves, and he was fast bound in the fetters of human respect. From the tabernacle our Lord complained as He did of old. "I have sheep who will not come to my sheepfold, but remain a prey to ravening wolves; I endured the cross for their sake, but they do not overcome the world, human respect and their own passions." Perhaps this sinner resembled St. Peter in having a generous heart but a weak will; should he, by God's grace, perceive his real condition, he will acknowledge his faults and repent of them. Then he will examine himself in God's sight and go to con-

fession, and at once a weight falls from his heart; the stone of the sepulchre is rolled back; his conscience revives; his heart recovers its goodness and the life of grace is restored to the soul. The friends who bound him fast in the bonds of human respect, the passions and bad habits that had so deadly a hold upon him are cast aside—he has risen full of strength, zeal and life; he is no longer to be found at home when he should be at Mass, nor in bad company when he should be at church; he has gone forth, leaving his old life behind him, and he is at the foot of the altar, making his Easter Communion with other good Catholics.

Thus does our Lord's resurrection bring about the resurrection of the souls of men. It is our delight to see our divine Master triumph over His enemies, but it is no less a joy to see you come to your Easter duties. Jesus Christ being risen from the dead, dieth no more; a true resurrection is the conquest of death, and it behooves you not to fall back into sin.

In a week or a month it will be as true as it is to-day that sin is the one great malady of the soul, and that salvation is assured to those only who are in the state of grace. Let us have courage and confidence. Since our Lord is risen, as He promised, and since you have returned to the life of grace, as you resolved, continue in the divine and spiritual life of which Holy Communion is the pledge. Our Saviour's resurrection ensures your own; the holy Eucharist implants in our bodies the germ of our resurrection and immortality. The Church says: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thee to life everlasting." Then the angels of God will sing with joy: "He is risen in glory; let us prepare for him the crown that he has deserved to wear in heaven."

Another Alternative Plan

Perseverance

Jesus Christ is risen, and our souls are restored to the state of grace. He dieth no more; shall we be able to stand firm?

I. **The resurrection is the model of our perseverance.** Our Lord remained alive; others who rose again returned to the

tomb. The resurrection constitutes our strength, and lifts our thoughts to heaven and our future glory. It puts the seal on our perseverance. *Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat . . . in vitam aeternam.*

II. **Our perseverance is the pledge of our future glory.** It is already a resurrection from, a break with the past. It disposes us for final perseverance. It makes us fit to receive the grace of final perseverance, which secures our glory in heaven. God desires the salvation of all men, and by persevering we correspond with His mercy.

Peroration. The dispositions and resolutions befitting our Easter Communion.

Low Sunday

TWO APPEARANCES OF OUR LORD

"Now when it was late that same day."—John xx. 19.

This gospel records two occasions on which our Lord appeared to the apostles, the first being the evening of Easter Sunday, when Thomas was absent, the second being a week later, when he was present.

I. **The first appearance.** The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. Do you fear occasions of sin, distractions and alliance with our Lord's enemies? Try to be recollected. Jesus came . . . and said . . . "Peace be to you." Banish your fears and accept peace with God, your neighbor and yourselves. You ought to be calm in spite of storms outside. Was it indeed our Lord? His wounds, voice and speech all proved that it was really Himself. Feel no alarm, where He is, all is truth. The apostles were glad. Our Lord's wounds proved His humanity, His resurrection proved the power of His divinity. When we have been really contrite, we find God again.

Again He said: "Peace be to you." The world may deny Him, but He bids us have peace; and St. Paul says that the peace of God surpasseth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7). "As

the Father hath sent me, I also send you." God the Father entrusted the mission to His Son made Man, who communicated it to the apostles, and they handed it on to their successors in every age. It has nothing to do with the State. "He breathed on them and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The divine spirit of Jesus Christ passed on to the apostles; they had heard His teaching and thenceforth were filled with His spirit. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Forgiveness of sins comes from God, and the priest acts in His name. We have here the Sacrament of Penance.

II. **The second appearance.** Thomas was present on this occasion, and the conditions upon which he insisted are most important for us. *All* the apostles had assembled. Did *all* of you come to your Easter duties? For the third time Jesus said: "Peace be to you"; then he bade Thomas put his finger on to the scars in His hands. He gives us actual proofs. The unbelieving apostle had asked for them, although now it was enough for him to see the scars. Those who at the present time refuse to believe what they do not see are foolish; the evidence of 2000 years should satisfy them. The four evangelists record at least ten occasions when our Lord appeared after His resurrection. St. John tells us that He did many other signs in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in the gospel. The apostles were ordered to preach, not to write everything down. Let us believe the Gospel, tradition, the teaching of the Church, and the living voice of history. "He that heareth you, heareth me."

Peroration. Importance of to-day's gospel—the mission entrusted to the apostles—St. Thomas' profession of faith—the permanence of our religion. Thus we shall pass on to life everlasting. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Peace

I. **Peace of conscience** secured by doing our duty towards God, our neighbors and ourselves. St. Augustine says: *Inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*

II. **Peace in eternity.** In the life to come God will give truth to our intellect, happiness to our hearts and freedom from suffering to our bodies after their resurrection.

III. **Means of obtaining peace.** Avoidance of worldly companions, and of sin; faith in God's promises; obedience to His commandments, discharge of all the duties of our holy religion.

Peroration. Few know how to appreciate, gain and preserve the peace that God alone can give. Let us live as true Christians.

Second Sunday after Easter

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'I am the good Shepherd.'"—John x. 11.

Our Lord was depicted as the good Shepherd by the prophets of old (Zach. xi.; Isaias xl.; Ezech. xxxiv.). He knows the souls of men, and leads, feeds and protects them.

I. **He is the leader of souls.** "He goeth before them and the sheep follow him." He leads them by His example, which is a force that draws them to Him. He practised before He taught. He is the truth that came down from heaven, the way that leads to heaven; He gives assurance, dispels illusions, guards against straying from the right path. Moreover He is holiness itself. In all that concerns us, He is our guide. He fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies, obeyed all the commandments of the Mosaic law, and gives us grace to carry out the Gospel teaching. In this way He is the good Shepherd leading us onward.

II. **He feeds our souls.** We are too apt to forget this fact. He feeds us (a) with His words, which sustain our spiritual life. "Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). His doctrine contains the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). (b) With His grace, which gives life and energy to our hearts and souls; helps us to overcome all obstacles and to advance in goodness; sustains us and enables us to gain merit. (c) With His blood.

In Exodus xxiv. 8, we read that Moses took blood and sprinkled it over the people. Our Lord said: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life" (John vi. 55); and St. Paul writes: "Jesus . . . that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate."

III. **He protects our souls.** He never withdraws His protection, *non dormitabit neque dormiet* (Ps. 120, 4). He takes us under the shadow of His wings and defends us with His mighty arm. He knows that enemies, seen and unseen, the powers of hell and Satan himself, all desire our destruction, but He came that we might have life (John x. 10). To live therefore with God in heaven is our final aim and will be our undying glory.

Peroration. Let us then follow the Good Shepherd, obey His commandments and remain united with Him. Amen.

Alternative Plan

The True Shepherd

I. Three kinds of shepherds: (a) the hireling, who works for pay and is not much interested in his flock; he is apt to save himself trouble and to run away when danger is imminent; (b) the careless shepherd, who lets his sheep do as they please and pays no attention; (c) the true shepherd, who, forgetful of self, thinks only of his flock, guards it from poisonous pasture (erroneous doctrines) and drives off wolves and other enemies (heretics and free-thinkers).

II. **A good shepherd** supplies the spiritual, intellectual and social needs of his flock; watches over the worthy members of it, comforts those of good will, and guides sinners into the way of salvation. He looks after belief, morals and public worship, and teaches his flock both by word and example.

III. **Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd,** foretold by the prophets. He acted first as shepherd to the Jews, when He called the Gentiles, sent His apostles to teach all men, and still guides the Church whom He has commissioned to carry on His work.

Peroration. Parents, masters and mistresses, all who are in charge of others, you too are shepherds in your own homes; and I may use St. Paul's words and say that I am appointed . . . in faith and truth (1 Tim. ii. 7), but we are all subject to our divine Saviour, the true Shepherd.

Third Sunday after Easter

CHOICE OF COMPANIONS

"The world shall rejoice and you shall be made sorrowful."—John xvi. 20.

In this gospel our Lord warns His disciples against the false joys of the world, and tells them that, if they bear their troubles in the right way, they will be deemed worthy of heaven. Let us consider the choice of our companions and association with the good.

I. **Choice of our companions.** Association with the wicked is the ruin of innocence, morality and true goodness. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" (Matt. vii). In the company of wicked men, virtue is afraid to show itself. How can we express opinions that, so far from being shared, are openly ridiculed? When virtue is forced to seek concealment, we grow accustomed to bad language. Gradually wicked actions cease to inspire us with horror, and, when finally virtue vanishes altogether, we share in doing wrong. This result is brought about by promises on the part of our friends, false maxims and even threats, until at last, as St. Augustine says: *Pudet non esse impudentem.* "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). A man is almost sure to fall, if he associates with the wicked. "Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are." It is useless to say that you must follow the fashion of the present day, and are carried away by the crowd. You should set high principles and sound opinions far above these things.

II. **Association with the good** produces analogous results. Virtue does not hesitate to show itself where there is no reason

to fear sarcasm or mockery. The sight of others' good works makes us love them; we feel a desire likewise to gain merit, and so we are encouraged and make progress. When we are surrounded by wise counsels and good examples, and perceive the piety of our friends, we are impelled to advance in the way of perfection. There is no middle course—a good man, isolated in the midst of the wicked, grows bad himself; if he associates with the good, he becomes better. The choice is easy.

Peroration. It is of supreme importance for us to lead virtuous and honorable lives, both as citizens and Christians. We should aim at doing our duty perfectly, at increasing our zeal and at adding to our store of merit. Only in this way can our souls continue to be worthy of God.

Alternative Plan

Life in this World

I. **The illusions of life.** Life is made up of days and years that form a chain stretching from the cradle to the grave. Our actions are the links in the chain. We cling to the years as they pass, and forget the end to which they lead.

II. **Life is short.** Our Saviour spoke of it as "a little while." Its joys and sorrows are short, and our time for gaining merit is very brief. We are but travelers, merchants trading for eternity. "Trade till I come" (Luke xix. 13). All our future is at stake. This life is indeed a vale of tears; we shed tears as infants and in our death agony; our friends will weep over our tombs. Throughout life we meet with troubles, failures, sickness and sorrow. Hope alone sustains us. "Here we have not a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Hebr. xiv. 14).

(Exhortation, resolutions)

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JESUS CHRIST AND THE WORLD

"I go to Him that sent me."—JOHN xvi. 5.

Our Saviour foretold His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, who was to convince the world of sin. The apostles listened, but their thoughts were centered on the approaching separation from their Master, until He repeated what He had said, and insisted upon the importance of the Holy Spirit's coming. Let us consider two points: (a) the apostles' questions, (b) the Holy Spirit's coming to convince the world.

I. **The apostles' questions.** Our Saviour acted before He taught. He taught men by His actions: in poverty at Bethlehem, in exile in Egypt, in poverty at Nazareth, by industry in the carpenter's shop, by His boundless zeal during His active life; by His sympathy with sinners and His miraculous powers displayed upon the sick, lepers, cripples and even the dead. Then He taught by word of mouth—listen to the voice of One who is spirit and life; meditate upon the truths of His revelation, which surpasses all human learning; strive to follow His example, which will lead you to perfection and the highest morality; implore His help and grace, that you may live a perfect life in this world and deserve admission to heaven. Thus did our Lord effect our sanctification.

II. **The Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin, of justice and of judgment.** *Of sin,* because the world (a) is hostile to God, who disregards it; (b) rejects the gospel, for true believers are in a minority; (c) refuses to acknowledge God's supremacy and clings to earth; (d) forgets eternity, and the rewards promised to the righteous and the punishment awaiting sinners.

Of justice, because the world (a) is unjust towards God, our Creator, benefactor and avenger; (b) is unjust towards Jesus Christ, who preached God's doctrine to men; (c) is unjust towards the Gospel, the law of the highest civilization; (d) is unjust

towards our Lord's followers, whom it persecutes and incites to sin by its false principles.

Of judgment, because the world (a) is the cause of men's condemnation, since it abhors virtue; (b) applauds or at least excuses the vices that God condemns; (c) despises penance and the works of penance; (d) pays no attention to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Peroration. The world passes away, but God remains; we ought to learn from Him the principles that are to guide our life; this is the surest way of attaining to life everlasting. Amen.

Alternative Plan

The World

The disciples were afraid to question their Master, who was on the point of leaving them. To question Christ is to listen to His teaching and meditate upon it; to obey His commandments and to implore His grace. He has done so much for us; He ransomed us, effected our justification and He still pours out upon us His Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world (a) *of sin,* since the world is God's enemy, rejects His gospel, denies His supremacy, and cares nothing for either His promises or His threats. (b) *Of justice,* for the world is a hotbed of scandal, denies Christ, encourages vice and prevents men from leading good lives. (c) *Of judgment,* because it mocks at virtue, readily accepts convenient maxims and applauds vices when they prove successful.

Fifth Sunday after Easter

ROGATIONTIDE

"If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you."—John xvi. 23.

The importance of prayer—men ask favors of one another; let us learn how to ask them of God. (Rogation, derived from *rogare,* to ask. The origin of the rogation days can be traced to

St. Mamertus, in the fifth century.) Three points: the expediency, solemnity and efficacy of prayer at Rogationtide.

I. **Expediency.** Our spiritual interests take precedence, but do not nullify our material interests in life. Devils desire our ruin, disasters threaten us—pray to God. You may say that you have plowed and sown the land, but it is God who makes the seed grow, and gives dew, rain and sunshine. Pray, then, to Him, but think first how you stand in His sight.

II. **Solemnity.** A large number of people united in prayer presents a solemn spectacle. First they kneel together round the altar, then they pray publicly along the roads and in front of almost every house in the parish. We obtain our food from the fields, and so we call upon our advocates, the saints in heaven, on behalf of our temporal interests. We should understand the oft-repeated *Ora pro nobis* and *Te rogamus audi nos,* and pray with lively faith.

III. **Efficacy.** God, who is merciful, wishes us to pray and then bestows upon us a hundredfold. Increase your piety and grumble and swear less over your work.

Every *Pater* and *Ave* that we say obtains us some reward. Hope then and persevere. Afterwards let us lift up our hearts and consider our spiritual interests. God feeds the birds, and His goodness extends over all nature, how much more will He provide for us?

Sunday after Ascension

THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

"The hour cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God."—John xvi. 2.

Our Lord ascended into heaven, and the apostles were about to enter upon the task that He had entrusted to them. They and their followers were to suffer persecution in every age, and there are, alas, men who persecute themselves by having an evil conscience. These fall into three classes: those who stifle the call to repent; those who adopt false principles; those who give way to scrupulosity.

I. **The call to repent.** Listen to the voice of conscience. It is a grace most valuable in its object, for it speaks continually, reminding us of what is really for our welfare. It is most necessary in its end, since it tends to convert sinners, dispel illusions and preserve the spirit of faith. It is most easily destroyed. If we refuse to listen, the voice grows faint and ceases to make itself heard, and then we are left with no guide through life. It will speak again to accuse and condemn us at the last day.

II. **False principles.** St. Paul speaks of a conscience steeped in false principles as "seared" (1 Tim. iv. 2). Such a conscience is dangerous, since it perversely pleads the force of necessity, custom and easy-going advice. It has no excuse. It argues that we are ignorant and in darkness, and that on certain points theologians do not agree; but when it has to judge another, it arrives at a different conclusion. It is incurable, and is radically mistaken. The Roman proconsuls in their zeal for the State and their false gods caused men to die as martyrs. With such a conscience men sin recklessly.

III. **Scrupulosity** is a snare and a destruction to many. A scrupulous person clings to his own opinion and takes no advice. He says that he is opposed to pride, yet he adheres to his own views, not to those of his director. He calls himself zealous for good, yet his perversity spoils and destroys his goodness, and makes him commit many sins. He professes to be anxious to resist temptation, yet he lingers and examines his temptations and lets his imagination dwell upon them, until he becomes slack, avoids Holy Communion and falls a victim to despair.

Peroration. Be better Christians, more obedient, with greater love of God.

Alternative Plan

Various Types of Conscience

1. *A conscience that is tender and Godfearing.* Let it be your guide.

2. *An easy-going and careless conscience* must be tested.

3. *A restless and uneasy conscience* must be kept quiet.
4. *A false and misleading conscience* must be corrected.
5. *A doubtful and wavering conscience.* Make up your mind.
6. *A scrupulous and timid conscience.* Obey your director.

Never adopt any principles that are not sanctioned by religion. Avoid troubles of conscience by submitting to the teaching of the Church. There you will find truth and the means of salvation.

PENTECOST

THE HOLY SPIRIT

"You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you."—ACTS i. 8.

For ten days after the Ascension, the apostles remained shut up in the Cenacle, in fear of the Jews. They chose St. Mathias in place of Judas. What were their thoughts during this time? One morning there came a sound from heaven, etc. (the Gospel narrative, Acts ii.). Whenever we make the Sign of the Cross, we mention the Holy Ghost; let us to-day consider what He is, what He does, and how we ought to act regarding Him.

I. **What the Holy Ghost is.** In the Book of Wisdom, xii. 1, we read: *O quam bonus et suavis est, Domine, Spiritus tuus in omnibus.* Hence the Holy Ghost is good and sweet.

Goodness is an attribute belonging to God alone. He manifests His goodness through His Spirit, who is good in Himself and good towards us. Through Him we receive remission of sin, increase of virtue, light to our souls and a right to life eternal. As soon as the apostles received the Holy Ghost, they began to preach, to make converts and to civilize mankind. The ministers of the Church receive the Holy Ghost at their ordination, and cooperate with Him in the work of sanctifying the souls of men. The faithful receive the Holy Ghost, whose gifts enable them to become saints.

Sweetness is inseparable from the Holy Ghost, for it is the beginning of virtue. The Church in her Pentecost hymn calls the Holy Ghost *Fons vivus,* abounding in divine gifts; *septiformis munere,* whose gifts are always proportionate to our needs; *spiritalis unctio,* whose sweetness imparts vigor to our spiritual

life. Our Lord promised that the Holy Ghost should teach us all truth, and we pray: *Accende lumen sensibus.*

II. **What the Holy Ghost does.** His power is infinite since He proceeds from God the Father and God the Son; yet, as St. Ambrose points out, it has three special results, viz., *Exurit peccata, torporem excutit, ignorantias illuminat. Exurit peccata;* the Holy Ghost sanctifies us, and His grace ought to cleanse our souls. *Torporem excutit.* In the Apocalypse (iv. 16) we read: "Because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Piety, which is the reverse of lukewarmness, is a gift of the Holy Ghost; it renders the yoke of the Gospel light and easy, affords us help in difficulties, gives us compensation for our sacrifices, sustains our fidelity and encourages us to persevere. *Ignorantias illuminat.* The apostles taught and civilized mankind—a Christian recognizes truth, unmasks error, perceives illusions and understands the things of God.

III. **How we ought to act.** Ezech. xxxvi. 27. *Spiritum meum ponam in medio vestri, et faciam ut in praeceptis meis ambuletis.* Hence we receive the Holy Spirit and He acts within us. We should reverence His presence, for He is a spirit of light: *Veni . . . et emitte caelitus lucis tuae radium;* a spirit of consolation: *Consolator optime, dulcis hospes animae;* a spirit of strength: *In labore requies, in aestu temperies.* We should obey His commandments. We each possess (a) a body—let us avoid sin, love the practice of our religion, and not shrink from penance; (b) a soul—let us use our intellect in grasping the truths of God, our will in carrying out His precepts, and our memory in thinking of His benefits and in wishing for His grace and glory.

Peroration. We cannot do without God's Holy Spirit; by His aid we shall lead good lives, gain merit and reach heaven.

Alternative Plan

Devotion to the Holy Ghost

Three points: duty, zeal and interest.

I. **Duty.** In writing to the Galatians (iv. 25) St. Paul says: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." He is

1. The creative Spirit, to whom everything should bow.
2. The Spirit of the Redeemer, that ought to animate us all.
3. The sanctifying Spirit, that aims at perfecting us.

II. **Zeal.** Let us be zealous servants of the Holy Spirit. (1) For the glory of God; (2) for the sanctification of our neighbors; (3) for the confusion of the world. "He shall convince the world of sin" (John xvi. 8).

III. **Our interest.** The presence of the Holy Ghost is to us a source (1) of *glory;* let us not grieve Him by our sins; (2) of *comfort,* since the unction of His grace increases our merits; (3) of *hope,* since He leads us on to holiness and final salvation.

Peroration. Let us listen to His suggestions, act as He wishes and remain faithful to divine grace. Amen.

Another Alternative Plan

The Twofold Triumph of the Holy Ghost

I. Over the Apostles. They were at first ignorant men, often rebuked by our divine Lord, but the Holy Spirit made them learned in the faith. They were weak and cowardly, but He changed them into heroes, ready to defend and die for their faith—this was an unexpected triumph.

II. **Over the world** through the ministry of the apostles. The world was sunk in error, but they came preaching truth; it was corrupt, but they banished vice and established virtue. The illusions of this world vanish when confronted with the Spirit of truth and holiness.

Another Plan for Pentecost, Suitable also for Confirmation

The apostles received the Holy Spirit after (a) they had been shut up in the Cenacle, cut off from the errors and wickedness of the world; (b) they had awaited His coming with eager desire, being mindful of the words spoken by the angels at the Ascension and of their Master's promises; (c) they had persevered in prayer.

Three wonderful things took place: (a) They were in sorrow, and the Holy Ghost comforted them; (b) they did not understand fully the mysteries of God and the teaching of Christ, but the Holy Ghost enlightened them; (c) they were weak and timid, but the Holy Ghost filled them with courage, strength and zeal.

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

First Sunday after Pentecost

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we mention the three divine Persons, but we use the word "name" in the singular, because it implies unity of substance. This mystery is the chief object of our faith, the sole source of our happiness, and the true model for our perfection.

I. **The chief object of our faith.** It is the great *mysterium fidei,* whence proceed all the other mysteries. How many things in nature possess threefold properties! It is the most august mystery, since in it we have the Godhead in all its purity and infinite perfection. It is the most incomprehensible mystery, for the three Persons, though distinct, have one and the same divinity, and form one God.

II. **The source of our happiness.** St. Paul in writing to the Romans (xi. 36) says: *Ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia.*

From God the Father, *ex ipso*—our creation; through God the Son, *per ipsum*—our redemption; in God the Holy Ghost, *in ipso*—our sanctification. Make the Sign of the Cross at every act that you do as Christians.

At death, on whom shall we call? The world is passing from our sight, and our judgment is approaching. Let us call upon God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, for our fate is in His hands. To one dying the Church says: "Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who was poured out upon thee." . . . "Although

he hath sinned, he hath not denied the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." In heaven we shall see, and have no need of faith; we shall possess, and have no need of hope, but charity, love of God to whom we owe everything, will never pass away.

III. **God is the true model for our perfection.** Consider the texts: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram. Sancti estote quia ego sanctus sum.* Let us strive to be perfect.

1. With regard to God. He is self-sufficient; let us be contented to think of and learn from Him, and to do all things for His sake.

2. With regard to ourselves. Of the early Christians we are told that they were of one heart and one soul. Let us be thus united with God, practising the virtues that He suggests.

3. With regard to our neighbors, who also came from God and are destined to return to Him. Let us act as God desires.

Peroration.

Alternative Plan

The gospel for the day falls into two parts, viz., the apostles' commission and our Lord's promises.

I. **The apostles' commission.** Five points:

1. The power of Christ, proved by His works and confirmed by His resurrection. As Son of Man, He was the head of the human race, as Son of God, He possessed divine authority. *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.*

2. Transmission of this divine power. The apostles were appointed—*mitto vos*—and then ordered to act—*euntes ergo.* Let us therefore listen to them, for their authority is beyond question; let us trust them, for their doctrine is true; let us do as they bid us, for they cannot lead us into error.

3. Their object. What were the apostles to do? To teach, preach the Gospel, to all nations. No race was to be excluded from the catholicity of God's revelation and His Church.

4. In whose name were they to baptize? They were the envoys of God, and were to speak and act in His name; there is one God *nomine,* but three Persons, the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier.

5. What were they to teach? Truths for men to believe, virtues for them to practice and the means to be employed.

II. **Our Lord's promises** may be regarded from three aspects: the authority of the Giver of the commission; the obstacles that the apostles would encounter; their ultimate triumph.

1. The authority of the Giver of the commission. Our Lord promised to be with the apostles "even to the consummation of the world." He was to be present in six ways: in the Holy Eucharist, in the Holy Sacrifice, by His grace, by His power, in His doctrine and in His Spirit. Thus He intended to guide and inspire them.

2. The obstacles that they would encounter. They, being uneducated men, would have to face learned philosophers; simple Galileans would have to deal with men of every race; preachers of penance and virtue would meet those who advocated self indulgence; men devoid of resources and material advantages would be victims of violent persecution. Moreover it would be their task to overthrow all previously current ideas of religion and morality, and to set up instead new dogmas and an austere moral code.

3. *Their ultimate triumph.* Our Lord had already said to His apostles: "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "Feed my sheep."

Peroration. Our Lord gave the apostles an object to attain, and promised them certain success. This object was to teach all nations, to establish the authority of the Church, to civilize the world and to show men the way of perfection.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE RELATIONS OF THE SACRIFICES OF THE MASS AND OF THE CROSS

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat: this is my body: which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me: for as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come." —1 COR. xi. 23-26.

I. **The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass** is the central act of Catholic worship. It is the principle of the Church's life, the source of her energy, the seat of her vitality, the bond of her cohesive unity, the point of convergence on which all her rites and ceremonies and sacraments center, the point of divergence whence flows the fecundity of all her graces; it is, as St. Thomas says, "the consummation of all the sacraments," or, as St. Bonaventure calls it, "the compendium of Christ's benefits to mankind."

It is all this and more; for human language and human figures waste themselves in the attempt to picture all that the Mass is to the Church, and through the Church to the whole world. Beyond yea or nay, the world would, ages ago, have perished because of the sins of men, were not the merits of Christ's Passion, as applied in the Mass, daily interposed as a mighty shield of protection between sinful man and the sword of the Almighty's vengeance. Take away the Mass, and you take away all; leave the Mass, and we want no more. Daily the sins of men strike in the face of the Almighty and cry out for vengeance, but daily the Sacrifice of the Mass cries out for mercy on the sinners.

Whence is all this efficacy of the Mass? What gives it this huge power to stay the arm of God? It derives its value principally from the relations it bears to the infinite Sacrifice of the God-Man Jesus Christ on the cross, because it was instituted as a standing memorial of that terrible tragedy, to apply

its immensurable merits for all time to the souls of men. This is the one great secret of its illimitable efficacy.

The Scriptural account of the institution of the Mass gives us the key to understand this great fact. St. Paul thus writes of the first Mass: "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: this is My Body which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the Chalice, after he had supped, saying: This Chalice is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as ye shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For as often as ye shall eat this Bread and drink the Chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come." These thrice-solemn and thrice-blessed words suggest the great relation which, according to the divine intention in the institution of the Mass, was to subsist between that sacrifice, first offered on Holy Thursday evening, and the adorable sacrificial tragedy of Calvary on the following Good-Friday morning. They show that the Mass was, by its institution, intended as a sacrifice commemorative of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Our divine Master, with His searching knowledge of the human heart, knew too well that grateful remembrance is no characteristic of the human race as such; but He foresaw with sorrow, that, unless some perpetual memorial of His bitter Passion were left them, the Gentiles, whom He was to call to the faith, like the Jews, would most ungratefully forget the God who had saved them. Hence His object in instituting the Eucharistic sacrifice was to leave us a keepsake of that love, greater than which no man hath—to bequeath us, after the ending of His sacred Passion, a precious legacy, the sight of which would stir up even our cold, forgetful hearts to a remembrance of the death which left us such a priceless possession. That keepsake, that legacy of our crucified God, is the Holy Mass. Perfection is an unfailing quality of all the divine works, and hence the Mass, which was left as a memorial of the Passion, must vividly and forcibly recall the tragedy it was instituted to perpetuate. Let us compare the two sacrifices, and see how this is so. That both are sacrifices you are all perfectly aware;

you know that both the Mass and the death of Christ on the cross contain, in the most perfect manner, all the elements of a sacrifice—namely, a victim, a priest, duly empowered and authorized, a sacrificial act, by which the victim is immolated, and the purposes for which the sacrifice is offered. All these elements are eminently present in both sacrifices, and with such a striking resemblance, that we may, in a most true sense, affirm that both are one and the same sacrifice substantially. The holy Council of Trent expresses this astounding truth in the following words: "We therefore confess that the Sacrifice of the Mass is and ought to be considered one and the same as that of the Cross, as the Victim is one and the same, namely, Christ our Lord, who immolated Himself, once only, after a bloody manner, on the altar of the cross. For the bloody and unbloody Victim are not two victims, but only one, whose sacrifice is daily renewed in the Eucharist, in obedience to the command of the Lord, "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke xxii. 19). Since this is so, my dearly beloved, it is really a matter of the most urgent importance that we should try to understand, as well as we can, the precise relationship which exists between the Mass and the death of Christ. If they are substantially the same sacrifice, and if the Sacrifice of the Cross was one of infinite merits, as we know it was, surely then the Mass is of priceless value and efficacy. If, as we know, is the case, the Mass is a renewal and continuation of the sacrifice of Calvary, what human standard can measure the treasure of mercy, grace and salvation which Jesus Christ has left His Church; and what limits are we to put to the boundless advantages the souls of men can derive from frequent and fervent assistance at the Holy Sacrifice. I know of no consideration half so potent as this to rouse up the slumbering faith of Catholics to a lively idea of what the Mass is. Let us then make a brief comparison of the two sacrifices, according to the various elements that go to constitute a true sacrifice. And first as regards the victim.

II. **The Victim of the Sacrifice of the Cross and of the Sacrifice of the Mass** is one and the same—Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day and the same forever—as really, as substantially,

as personally present in the consecrated species of the Mass, as He was on the hard rough tree of the cross of Calvary. It is the same solid flesh, the same sacred Body, the same Body that was scourged in the Hall of Pontius Pilate; which, according to the prediction of the prophet, had its hands and feet literally "digged" in the nailings to the cross, which was drained of its last drop of blood by the sharp point of the Roman soldier's lance—that same Body is just as really and as personally and as identically present on our altars by the tremendous series of miracles in transubstantiation. And it is that same Body which is the victim in the Holy Mass, as it was on the tree of the cross. Where, then, my dearly beloved, is our faith? Every Catholic believes this most firmly in his intellect, and many a loyal son of the Church would seal his belief with his martyred blood; but the misfortune is, that the truth does not come from our intellect into our heart, there to impress itself indelibly like a burning caustic, and thence to influence visibly our life and make us truly devout to the Holy Mass. The sainted King Louis of France was once told by a breathless courtier that our Lord had appeared visibly in the consecrated host. On being invited to go and witness the miraculous appearance, the king replied, "Let those who have not faith go to behold this miracle; for my part, I believe in the real presence of my Lord in the sacred host as firmly as if I saw it visibly, for my eyes and other senses may deceive me, but my faith can never do so." There is an example of lively faith which may well put many of us to shame. This, then, my dearly beloved, is the first point in the relationship between the Mass and the sacrifice of Christ's death: in both there is the same Victim, actually slain on the cross by the real physical separation of the body and blood; mystically slain on our altars under the figure of death by the separate consecration of the species.

The next point of resemblance is, that in both sacrifices we have the same principal priest and offerer—Jesus Christ, at once the priest and victim on our daily altars as on Mount Calvary. Surely this, too, is another marvelous truth! According to prophecy, He was to be a priest forever—not the

priest of one sacrifice of His Body and Blood, infinite though that was, but the priest of numberless sacrifices, to announce His death till He comes again at the consummation of the world. The single Sacrifice of Calvary was sufficient and superabundantly so, to satisfy the rigors of the Eternal Father's justice; but it was not sufficient to exhaust the love "greater than which no man hath." He should be a priest forever, daily continuing and renewing the sacrifice wherein He laid down His life for His friends; daily applying to the souls of men the infinite merits He accumulated for their benefit at the cost of His own precious Blood. And He is a priest forever, for He is the principal offerer of every Mass that is celebrated in every place "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." True, He acts through a visible minister, an anointed priest, duly ordained that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for our sins; but this mortal visible priest is but the representative of the invisible High Priest: he merely performs the external rites and ceremonies; he acts in the name and person of Jesus Christ, who is the real offerer, since it is His omnipotent power that changes the substance of bread and wine into the real Body and Blood of the same Jesus Christ, who was crucified and slain. Jesus Christ, then, is the true principal priest in the Mass, and offers Himself up for us to the Eternal Father every day, as once on Calvary He offered Himself for us to God, an oblation and a victim of sweet odor (Eph. v. 2).

III. **The sacrificial act of immolation** is the next point of comparison. On the Cross, Christ freely accepted the death demanded by the rigors of the offended justice of the Father. "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." A most ignominious death was placed before Him, and, with desire desiring to eat that Pasch too, He stretched forth in yearning and longing His sacred arms to embrace the death presented to Him. That supreme act of sovereign conformity to the Father's will was the sacrificial act in the Sacrifice of the Cross. But where is the principal act in the Mass? Where is the immolation of the victim? It is found in the words of consecration. You know that these words are spoken in the

name and person of Christ, and by virtue of His omnipotence they at once bring about what they signify. Quick as thought or the lightning flash, the moment the words of consecration are finished the substance of bread and wine are entirely changed into the real Body and Blood of God the Son made man. Reflect for an instant on the awful significance of this change, and see whether or not it deserves the name of immolation—nay, almost annihilation. Was not the mystery of the Incarnation something approaching to annihilation. It was at least an "emptying out" of the divinity, according to the famous words of the apostle: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 7). And yet the humiliation of Jesus in the consecrated species is greater still. For in the Incarnation He concealed only His divinity, while in the Mass He concealed also His sacred humanity. And besides, the humiliation of the sacrifice of our altar appears to presuppose the "emptying out" in the Incarnation. St. Alphonsus Liguori evidently thinks so, when, in describing "the many rough and lofty mountains" which the spouse of souls had to traverse in coming to unite Himself to His beloved in the Blessed Sacrament, the holy doctor employs these most beautiful and touching expressions, which it is given only to saints to conceive and utter: "First, from being God, thou hadst to become man; from being infinite, to become an infant; from being the Lord of the Universe, to become a servant; from the bosom of the Eternal Father, and from the throne of glory to an ignominious gibbet." These are the words of a saint, and it would be difficult to describe better than they do the unutterable abasement of Jesus hidden away under the sacramental veils. Do they not give evidence of an immolation of the victim in the adorable Mass? Surely, here is humiliation, here is a thorough "emptying out." How the angels of heaven must he wrapt in must and adoring wonderment. That every morning Jesus, by one act of abasement, renews two mysteries—His incarnation and His death. His incarnation, according to the memorable words of St. Augustine, that, "In the hands of the priest, as in the womb of the Virgin, the Son of God is made flesh." His death, by the separate consecration of the two

species, which is a mystical representation of His actual death on Calvary. That the author of all life, who is Himself the eternal life—"I am the way, the truth, and the life"—that He should appear under the figure of death, "a Lamb standing as it were slain" (Apoc. v. 6). That He should surrender Himself abjectly and unconditionally into the power of His creatures, and perhaps—terrible to think—of a sin-stained creature. That He should offer Himself voluntarily to be shackled with the bonds of the lowly sacramental species, and become the love-bound prisoner of the tabernacle. That He should become more helpless than He did as an infant in the stable, where He had an immaculate Mother to perform the offices required by childhood; and trust Himself to the custody of a weak man who has known sin. That He should assume the form of inanimate meat and drink. That the infinity of divine power and majesty should be, as it were, condensed into a tiny host, which a draft of wind from an open window might easily toss about.

Ah, my friends, one does not know where to stop in describing the humiliations of Jesus in the Sacrifice of the Mass. These are not thoughts of pious persons in ecstatic communion with God. No, they are but sober truths of Catholic doctrine, yet how intoxicating they should be, if we had but a lively faith. Enough has been said to show that, in the sacrifice of our altars, there is an immolation of the victim, more real than the imagination can conceive. And all yet said takes no account of the mystic death which Christ suffers by the separate consecration of the species. It is not an actual death, "for Christ rising again from the dead dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him." Yes, since the bread is His Body and the wine His Blood, their separate consecration typifies, in a most clear manner, the real shedding of the Blood of Jesus from His Body on the altar of the cross. But all this took place in a bloody manner on Mount Calvary, while on our altars it occurs in an unbloody manner. And this is the great point of difference between the two sacrifices.

To explain adequately the relationship of the Mass and the

death of Jesus, under the aspect of the purpose of each sacrifice, would require a long sermon, or even a series of sermons. Hence at present I can not do more than refer to it in a few words. The purpose of Christ's death on the cross was a fourfold one, to offer a sacrifice of infinite adoration, thanksgiving, satisfaction and impetration to His heavenly Father, in atonement for the sins of men in all time and in all nations. His death was an act infinitely meritorious, and superabundantly satisfied the divine justice for our sins. Our debt of sin was great; the payment was greater still. The dishonor of our crimes was indeed terrible; but the reparation of honor far exceeded the offense. One world sinned; but an atoning sacrifice was offered, sufficient to satisfy for the sins of worlds innumerable. Yet, by the death of the Saviour, these infinite merits were not actually applied to our souls. It was left to the Mass to do this. And here we see the real value of the Mass. Morning after morning it applies to the souls of men the infinite merits stored up in the Passion. The Passion turned once more toward men the face of God the Father, averted by their sins; it, in other words, made us capable of redemption. The Mass puts us in possession of the merits accumulated by Christ's death. It is certain that, if so were the will of God, a single Mass would be sufficient to apply all these infinite merits, according to the words of St. Chrysostom, "The celebration of Mass is of as much value as the death of Christ on the cross." But that God does not so wish it is also certain, still who can limit the amount of treasure to be derived from this infinite mine? The ocean of His merits is infinite; no soul can, then, be large enough to exhaust it. Expand, therefore, the capacity of your hearts, by love and intense devotion, and rest assured that no amount of favors can exhaust the divine liberality of Him who died for love.

I will say but one brief word in conclusion, for it is better to let these wonderful truths speak directly to your own hearts. Try to live up to your faith. Let the words of St. Peter Damian sound in your ears like a warning trumpet: "Of what avail is it to believe as a Catholic, but to live as an infidel." After recounting the various miracles that occur in the con-

secration, Father Faber said that the greatest miracle of all was that men could be so cold and careless in their conduct toward the Holy Sacrifice. A single Mass, heard with rapt devotion and attention, can bring you more numerous and more precious graces than all the prayers, good works, sufferings and penances of a lifetime, unaided by the merits of Christ's Passion as applied in the Mass.

Third Sunday after Pentecost

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE WEAK AND ERRING

"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."—Gospel of day.

I. **The human race the lost sheep.** Out of all of that creation which the hands of God had made, and which He declared was "very good," we alone, like lost sheep, transgressed the limits and the laws laid down for our observance. But Christ loved us infinitely well. He could not let us go without making a supreme effort to reclaim us. Everything else that He had made became less than nothing to Him so long as we had slipped away from His affectionate keeping, and He determined to bring us back again. Nothing could daunt Him. Nothing would be allowed to stand in His way. Not the stable of Bethlehem, nor the coldness and want of sympathy on the part of man which He knew He must submit to on this earth, nor the cruel suffering, nor the death on Calvary could deter Him from His purpose. Man must be made to return from his evil ways, even if it cost the Son of God that life which, for our sakes, He had taken upon Himself.

But the love of Christ for the sinner, as shown to us in the Gospel, means much more than this. The great blessing of the Redemption is indeed an inestimable boon, and one of the greatest marks of the Redeemer's love; but there is a mark of His love far more striking and almost infinitely more attractive. In the Redemption He loved all *in general;* can it be maintained that His love for the *individual* sinner is just as great? He has followed *all:* does He follow the *single* sheep which, after

the great tragedy of the crucifixion, wanders from the path of holiness? For all He died; is His divine heart heavy with a bitterness which weighs Him down, when some one of His children forgets His commandments, breaks His laws, wanders from His sweet society, and is careful only about the pleasures, the allurements, the sins of the world?

The answer to these questions is contained in the words with which we have commenced this discourse: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." It was an accusation continually leveled against Him. To the Pharisees it was a matter of the most serious moment that this new Prophet who had appeared, and after whom all of the people were running, was not to be found so much at their tables as at those of the sinful. "Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. ix. 11), they inquired of the disciples. Surely, a man is to be known by the company he keeps, is the suggestion which underlay the inquiry! Was it not well known that these publicans were extortioners and impious and enemies to the law of God, men whose sins covered their souls with a manifold defilement? Why did He, how could He, do this thing? "The Son of Man hath come to seek and to save that which was lost," is His quiet answer. They that are in health, He says, need not a physician. They may go about their business, enjoy the light of the day, sleep through the stillness of the night, take their food in peace. Why should the medical man take *their* case into his consideration? How should the divine Physician of the soul of man be expected to concern Himself about those who regarded themselves as not needing anything which He, with His spiritual healing powers, could do for them? Cleansing from sin was far more important for Him than the healing of bodily sickness. To forgive, to heal, to cleanse the sinner, was far more His business than was the healing of the man sick of the palsy, and the purifying of the leper. He was pleased to do the latter, but He was continually engaged in trying to do the former. It was His first thought even when they that sought Him looked only for manifestation of those wonderful, curing powers for which, more than anything else, they published His name far and wide in the land. "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," were the very

first words which issued from His divine lips, although the person desired nothing, thought of nothing, but the health of the body. To the invalid this forgiveness of the iniquities contracted in the flesh was a matter with which the wonderful Man, to whom he had come, had nothing to do; but it was of supreme interest and importance to our Lord. In each new case which was introduced to His notice He saw, first and foremost, not the needs of the body, although they were clearly marked in the pale, wan face, the broken limb, or the form covered with disease. His divine eyes penetrated to more hidden depths where, so far as the patient himself considered it, the greatest peace was reigning. The invalid knew only of the waves and the billows of human life, cruel in the affliction which he was bearing; the keen glance of the Son of God perceived something far more dangerous, and symptoms far more serious, in the soul, where quietness only covered a state of corruption, just as the bottom of the ocean, where all is still, is strewn with the débris of shipwrecks and the remnants of all kinds of corrupted life.

II. **Christ loved the sinner.** Better than any one of whom we have the least knowledge, He could distinguish so well between the action done and the person by whose instrumentality it was wrought. The action of wickedness He hated; the sinner He loved. There is a beautiful human side to this tenderness. It is not the healthy and the strong on whom, in the midst of the earthly family, the affection of the mother is showered, and the tender solicitude of the father is poured out. The child whose life has for long hung on a thread; or the son who has wandered away from home and has lived in penury and want—the weak and the sickly, the wayward and the wilful, the restless and the lost—these twine themselves around the heart of the parents in a way in which the stronger and steadier children do not. And the reason is not far to seek. It is because there is no danger of these leaving the home, either by their own wilfulness or by the hand of death; whereas, in the case of the former, the horrible shadow of departure is ever hanging, like a sword, over the imagination of the heads of the family.

Not, therefore, without its touch of human nature is the love which Christ has for the sinful. The righteous are in a safe place and, so far as their salvation at the present moment is concerned, they cause Him no uneasiness, afflict Him with no terrible anxiety. They are still with Him, and have neither gone over to the enemy, nor suffered the thought of such a defection and desertion even to enter into their mind. But the sinner has gone from Him. He may go on from infamy to infamy. He has joined the ranks of one who, if his pay at the present may be a brief spell of worldly pleasure and enjoyment, will, nevertheless be inexorable at the end, and take the soul for whom Christ died to the place "prepared for the devil and his angels." What can "ninety and nine of the just who know no sin" be to our Lord under such circumstances, and with His mind busied with these reflections? All things combine together to make Him think more about the sheep that is being lost than about all of those who need not penance. His love is heightened or deepened by the fear of losing the soul that is wandering; a feeling of the intensest pity takes complete possession of Him and spurs him on to try in every manner consonant with free will to bring the sinner back to him; after all that He has done for the ransom of each soul, particularly upon the cross, it hurts Him that any should remain in the possession of the evil one.

How great His love is for the sinful is well proved by the manner in which He treated St. Mary Magdalene and the dying thief. For a long time He had watched the career of the two. Who could deny that, in the case of them both, there seemed the greatest probability that they, at least, would never enjoy the benefits of the Redemption? If any one was becoming, day by day, more fitted for the place of punishment destined for the wicked, it would appear to have been Magdalene, whose name was familiar in the mouths of all as entirely forgetful of the highest duties and instincts of womankind. Christ watched her; was anxious for her; endeavored to turn her from the error of her ways; and at last brought her into His very presence. But He would not have won her fond allegiance to Him had it not been for the gentle love which,

at that very meeting, in spite of the great chasm which existed between them, He manifested for her in her deplorable state.

And there is, in addition, that divine emulation which will not allow Him to relinquish the sovereignty over us without making the very greatest of efforts. We make greater endeavors to hold what we are in danger of losing than to gain possession of what has not previously belonged to us. We sit silent on the bank experiencing no more than ordinary interest in fishing so long as the fish has not as yet been hooked. But let it once become ours; let it struggle to get away; let it leave our rod and return to the stream from which we thought ourselves fortunate in alluring it, and then our efforts will be doubled. Christ has had us all at one time in His loving toils when we were made His in our infancy. Let the devil come and take us away; let us once escape from the hands of our Lord and Master; let us become numbered with the wicked; and then it is difficult not to suppose that the efforts of Christ to recover us will be of the most vigorous kind and of a nature that nothing can weaken.

III. **The means employed for our conversion.** It is hard to describe how we are brought back to Him, so secretly is it done, and so wonderfully. Sometimes it is by reading a book, one passage of which haunts us and stays in our mind, like a tune from which we would be free, but which repeats itself again and again. Sometimes we enter a Church, not for years hitherto frequented by us. There is a stillness in the place, and a silence. It brings back to us the scenes of childhood; it reminds us of faces "loved long since and lost awhile"; parents and friends, long since gone to their rest, start up in our recollection. It arouses in our minds the thoughts of our better and less sinful days. And then our own soul begins to reflect on its sad state and condition, and the work of repentance begins with remorse! Sometimes Christ calls us by that sense of loneliness which all, at times, and particularly the wicked, feel. We are touched by the coldness of the world, by its unkindness, harshness and bitterness, and we long again for the warmth of religion, like the prodigal son, who in the midst of his swine, thought of the comfort of his father's house. The

hand of death, too, is powerful here. The grave has closed, perhaps, over the very best of our hopes, over the most cherished of our loves. The favorite child has gone; the husband, the wife; the mother, the father; or, it may be, a friend without whom we feel we may not, can not, live. Such events not only bring tears to the eyes, but have been often known, as it were, to split the soul asunder until the man sees the condition of his spiritual life in all its hideous deformity, and turns to Christ, the fountain of pure water, to become clean.

And the Shepherd comes to us Himself. He says so. He has assured us that He stands at the door and knocks. He has said that He seeks his one sheep until He find it. Not only does the apostle tell us that "neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love" of our Lord, but He is careful enough to add "nor any other thing." Go where you will, you will not shake Him off. You may, to use the expression of the Psalmist, walk in the way of the sinner, and sit in the seat of the ungodly; you may have harkened to the cry of the wicked mentioned by the Book of Proverbs, "Throw in your lot with us, and let there be one purse between us"; but the Shepherd of your soul will shadow your steps and follow after you, hoping, perhaps against hope, that He may yet win you back. So long as there is life, so long does He foster the feeling that yet you may be His. Aye! how much He bears as He works on and waits to reclaim us! He hears Himself abused, suffers Himself to be insulted, knows that all are welcomed excepting Him—the pleasures that last a moment only, and the friends and companions that are our worst enemies in every way—but still He stays, His love never failing, His determination never to relinquish hope of us, never flagging, His appeal to our conscience ever persistent and never still! The approach of death does not frighten Him away. He becomes, on the contrary, more anxious. The time for us is short, and He knows it. A few moments only, and we, for whom He died on the cross, may be forever lost. How overflowing is His kindness then to the sinful! He asks no long prayer, nor even a fountain of tears which one would think that a life misspent must require

wherewith to wash away its enormities; one word only is enough to satisfy the love of Christ, and that word, the expression of our sorrow.

How difficult it seems to be lost! With the constant solicitude of our loving Master all during the career of wickedness which marks the sinner's life; with the easy conditions He has laid down for the act of repentance, so easy that the weakest may fulfill them; how, we sometimes ask ourselves, is it possible for Satan to claim any one, even the worst? With the whole of heaven anxious; with Mary, the Mother of God, ever uplifting her sinless hands, asking God to pardon and to spare; with the angels trembling for us and sending forth their ardent prayers; with the saints, whose one desire is that a soul, howsoever bad, should not escape the joy which they possess, and who, therefore, intercede always for the wicked; with all this we say, how can the devil triumph and the kingdom of hell be full? One thing only accounts for it, and is sufficient to account for it, and that one thing is our own will. No one would be lost did it rest with Christ; but what can He do, when *we* are determined to have it so? He will not force us into heaven, because by so doing He would demean both Himself and us. We are free. The wind that "bloweth where it listeth" is a slave compared with us, made free with that jewel of free will with which God has endowed us. It is a priceless gift; but like most priceless things, it presents to us dangerous possibilities. We can say to God, "I will not." We can annihilate the efforts which the Good Shepherd, day by day and every moment, is making for our salvation! We can make the prayers of Our Lady fall powerless from her lips, and render of no avail the care which flows for us from her compassionate breast. To every petition of angel, of saint, and even of our divine Lord Himself, the Eternal Father may still answer, "but the one you intercede for *will* not better his ways, *will* not accept the kingdom of heaven, *will* not break with habits and inclinations, *will* not forsake either the devil or his works!"

Only let us *will*, brethren, and the task of our salvation is really done. But let us will *now*. *Now* let us break with the past and burst asunder the cords of wicked habit and of sinful custom.

No future moment is safe for this matter. What you will not do now you may not live to do to-morrow, and the resolution and the will which you are obstinate in not making at the present moment, will be doubly hard to accomplish at a future date. For time makes us perfect in obstinacy, as it does in most other things. If to-day you will not hear His voice, you are but adding another day to that refusal to listen, which, by repeated action, has become a settled habit. And that which is a settled habit you will not be able to reform at the moment you are dying. As a man lives so will he die. Flout the divine mercy if you will; go on in your sins if you still are determined to do it; break the Heart of Christ, and tear to pieces that of Our Lady, but do not buoy yourselves up with the foolish thought that, at the end, you will make it all straight and sound, that at the last moment you will be contrite, very contrite! For the longer you live in a state of obstinacy the more it becomes a second nature to you, and the fear of death, powerful as it is, very rarely changes that in us which, as a second nature, casts its strong roots deep down into our body and soul.

While we have time, then, let us do good; and at this moment let us determine that so much love shown on the part of Christ to the sinful shall not, in our case, be thrown to the winds, nor rendered absolutely profitless.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

"Jesus stood by the Lake of Genesareth."—Luke v. 1.

The apostles had labored all night and taken nothing. So men labor, who live without God. In the morning Jesus came to them. The same identical work, done with Him, becomes profitable. So Christians work. Two classes of men:

I. **Sinners and careless Christians.** "We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing." Many think only of their worldly interests. Forgetfulness of any higher motive produces darkness in their souls; they exhaust their strength, and yet, in God's sight, their labor has no result. They suffer (a) *blindness.* Though clever in the eyes of men, they forget

God, they fritter away their powers and have no support to enable them to face death; (b) *pain.* They find no comfort amidst their labors, have no taste for the supernatural, are overwhelmed by their passions, which became a very scourge to them. (c) *Misery.* Their labor is unprofitable, even from the worldly point of view, where success is difficult and always below our expectations. It is unprofitable, too, in God's sight, since He abandons those who do not live for Him. The apostles were our Lord's friends and followers, but they labored without Him and accomplished nothing. Some worthy people are honest folks, but without the spirit of faith, and so they labor without God, and have no success. We all ought to work in union with God. This is the attitude of the righteous.

II. **True Christians** order their lives in accordance with the commandments and the Gospel; they are faithful to sanctifying grace and do not waste actual graces. They enjoy many consolations. It was laborious to fish all night, and laborious too to cast the net again in the morning, but the second time the net was full, and labor became a delight. Holy Mass, prayer and the sacraments are the same for all Catholics, but they are a source of consolation and merit only to the good, who can look forward to the promised reward. Hence martyrs, religious and men of good will are all encouraged by love of God. God promises great results. Merit, grace restored, further good works, rewards for even trivial actions.

We can all learn a lesson from the miraculous draught of fishes; there may be no need to make great changes in our way of life, but we must have the spirit of faith and the remembrance of God.

Peroration. To labor with God is the surest means of securing success both in this life and the next.

Alternative Plan

Our Parish Church

"Going up into one of the ships, which was Simon's . . . sitting He taught the multitudes out of the ship" (Luke v. 3). There were two ships, one of which belonged to Simon Peter. This

was the ship which Jesus entered. God teaches mankind only in the Church governed by the successor of Peter.

Two points: (1) The true religion; (2) Our Parish Church.

I. **The true Religion** consists of doctrines revealed by God, which we must believe, and commandments laid down by Him, which we must obey. We must believe that it is possible to know God, and that it is necessary to know Him, if we are to advance in our spiritual life, that the sanctification of our souls is His work, that He assigns merit to what we do, and that we can attain to life everlasting. Our life here below is made up of various kinds of actions; God tells us how we must act towards Him, our neighbors and ourselves so as to gain merit. God has revealed certain doctrines and commandments—to our intellect, which can understand them; to our will, which can conform to them; to our bodies, which can act in accordance with them. He has made this revelation in order to guide us in our conduct as individuals, and as members of a family and State. Since He is our Creator, He has an absolute right over us, and, since we are His creatures, it is our bounden duty to obey Him. He lays His commands upon us, and He is fully entitled to do so, since He created the world, redeemed mankind, sanctifies our souls and will be our reward in heaven. Hence it was for Him alone to reveal His rights and our duties. We ought to listen to Him and to no one else; the true religion proceeds from Him and is preached in His name, and we find Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church, the ship that is Peter's.

II. **Our parish church.** The building where the faithful children of Holy Church assemble. The nave recalls the ship, and the sanctuary is the place set apart for the clergy, who make known the Words of Christ. The parish is a portion of the great Catholic Church, and the parochial Mass is for the edification of all, the public act of worship, a memorial of the Cenacle and of Calvary, an opportunity for spiritual or sacramental Communion. The sermon is an explanation of Christ's teaching, and it is our duty to accept it with faith, practice it with piety and observe it under all circumstances.

The Catholic religion is the only religion founded by God

and preached by the apostles and their direct successors; it alone is holy, both in doctrine and works; it alone is true, both through its origin and its history. Schisms and heresies proceed from men.

Peroration. The Catholic Church guards the religion of Christ, and it is nowhere else. Let us always be guided by the Church.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

WRATH AND CURSING

"Whosoever is angry with his brother . . ."—Matt. v. 22.

Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is a summary of His doctrine, and this gospel is taken from it.

Two kinds of insults are condemned by the civil tribunal and by the council, but one is pronounced worthy of hell. Let us consider the nature of and the remedies for wrath and abusive language.

I. **Their nature.** There is such a thing as righteous anger, the outcome of zeal at a moment when gentleness would be a sign of weakness. Our Lord felt this anger when He drove out those who profaned the Temple. But wrath, like sin, leads to abuse, oaths, blasphemy, curses, calumny, slander and violence; therefore it is opposed to the Spirit of Christ, who was "meek and humble in heart." It is an insult to God. An angry man calls down evil upon his neighbor, maligns Providence and gives way to the devil. It injures our neighbors by bad examples, gives rise to scandal; reproaches, insane wishes. It does great harm to oneself, for evil is productive of evil.

Do not plead in excuse that you were in a rage when you swore, or that you are so much in the habit of swearing that you cannot help it, or that others feel no scruple about using such expressions.

II. **The remedy.** St. Paul bids the Ephesians (iv. 2) walk "with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity." *With humility,* i.e., thinking but little of oneself; the remembrance of our own worthlessness makes us less ready to find fault with others. *With mildness.* Our Lord said:

"Learn of me, for I am meek." After the storm there was a great calm. St. Francis of Sales said: "My tongue and I have agreed that it is never to say a word, as long as my heart is disturbed." With a person given to anger no one can enjoy liberty, security or peace.

Alternative Plan

Venial Sin

Two points: mistaken ideas concerning it; its consequences.

I. **Mistaken ideas concerning it.** People do wrong to make light of it for it is really an offence against God, and by committing venial sin we show ourselves to be indifferent, unmortified and capable of becoming impenitent. Our souls are in danger, as we do not know precisely at what point mortal sins begin, and it may depend upon our dispositions whether a venial sin becomes mortal. We risk the loss of sanctifying grace.

II. **Consequences.** It is by no means trivial before God. Venial sin has to be expiated in purgatory. A sin committed at first inadvertently may afterwards become deliberate. It is an act of disobedience to grace, destroys purity of conscience, and inclines us to carelessness that may have disastrous results. It strengthens our evil tendencies and so is a continual peril to our souls.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

BLESSING OF THE BREAD

"Taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke and gave to His Disciples . . . and they had a few little fishes, and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them."—Mark viii. 6, 7.

In this gospel note that our Lord blessed the loaves and fishes. Two points: He blessed, and He commanded it to be set before them. Important lessons.

I. **He blessed.** The Church has some customs that date back to the earliest times and have come down to us by tra-

dition. We read of blessed bread several times in the Gospels. The food supplied to these four thousand persons was supernatural. At the creation God blessed the first man and woman. Everything created by God is good, but His creation is corrupted by sin. St. Paul says: "Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). God's blessing is perpetuated in the prayers of the Church. "Every creature . . . is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). The Sign of the Cross always accompanies these prayers, and, besides this, holy water was used and the laying on of hands.

II. **He commanded to be set before them.** According to St. Augustine there are four kinds of Christians: (1) Those who belong only to the soul of the Church, such as catechumens, who possess virtue and do good works even before their baptism. (2) Those who belong only to the body of the Church, such as men who are outwardly Christians, but have no genuine faith. (3) Those who belong neither to the soul nor to the body of the Church, such as heretics and schismatics, and baptized persons who do not practice their religion. (4) Those who belong both to the soul and the body of the Church, and are true followers of Christ.

Blessed bread represents charity and union, and the common possession of spiritual benefits. It represents also the Holy Eucharist, and is received in place of it by non-communicants.

Four thoughts. (a) Piety and reverence; (b) remembrance of the bread of tears amidst the labors of this life; (c) hope of the bread of joy in the virtues that unite us to God; (d) certainty that it is holy, because it is blessed.

Our Lord gave the miraculous food to the apostles, and we receive it from the Church. *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos* (Matt. xi. 28).

Peroration. Lift up your thoughts. Four thousand men: our Lord was expected for four thousand years; four cardinal virtues. Seven loaves, seven sacraments; two fishes, two natures in Jesus Christ. Come, with the three theological virtues that do most honor to the Blessed Trinity.

Alternative Plan

Divine Providence

"Whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness.—Mark viii. 4.

The multitude had been listening to Jesus for three days, but their bodies, too, required nourishment, and divine Providence was about to supply it. In all our trials, let us have recourse to God, being, however, on our guard against unjust want of confidence in Him, mistaken confidence and blindness.

I. **Unjust want of confidence.** True Christians say: *Auxilium meum a Domino,—Deus in adjutorium meum intende,* whereas others complain only to men, are depressed by the magnitude of their misfortunes, and do not turn to God. God does not work miracles in every detail of life, but He orders circumstances and inspires us with good will. Put aside all excessive uneasiness, pray, "help yourself and heaven will help you." "God created us without our co-operation, but He does not save us without it" (St. Augustine).

II. **Mistaken confidence.** God sends the rain and the sunshine, but the laborer must sow the seed, otherwise there will be no harvest. Do not leave all to God—avoid discouragement, which makes us disinclined to act; pride, which refuses to submit to His decrees; indolence, which robs us of all zeal; love of ease, which deceives us.

III. **Blindness.** We are quick to notice what touches us closely, but blind to God's benefits. Man did not create corn, nor does he guide the sun, nor make the flowers and fruits grow. God's work is permanent, even in man whose strength He sustains. When everything goes as *we* wish, we forget God. When we are unsuccessful, we grumble; but after all we owe every good thing to God and ought to thank Him for it. Many turn His gifts against Himself, and make use of them for sinful purposes.

Peroration. Let us think with gratitude of our Lord's compassion for the multitude, and exert ourselves to love and serve Him. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HYPOCRISY

"Beware of false prophets . . . every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."—MATT. vii. 15, 19.

This gospel teaches us to beware of *hypocrisy*, an evil tree in the spiritual garden of the Church, an abominable, troublesome and unprofitable kind of deception.

I. **Abominable.** Religion is a sacred and serious matter, and a hypocrite feigns a piety that he does not feel. We can never deceive God, but hypocrisy is hateful also in the sight of men, who fear lest they should form a rash judgment of a hypocrite, and he is always in a state of self-contradiction; he wishes to be accredited with virtues that he does not possess, and, whilst he continues to sin, he hopes to win the esteem of respectable people.

II. **Troublesome.** Hypocrisy is difficult to devise. It is not easy to behave in a way contrary to one's real character, or to speak in a way that belies one's true manners and principles —in short, to be a whited sepulchre. Still more difficult is it to keep up hypocrisy and always to act a part; to be really jealous, miserly, indifferent and spiteful, and to behave as though one were friendly, generous, good and sincere; to have the ferocity of a wolf and to display the gentleness of a lamb. Hypocrisy is difficult to conceal. The hypocrite is acting a hateful part, but has to seem natural and straightforward; a word or gesture might betray him. He must inevitably suffer acutely, and he would be far happier if he tried really to be what he is only in appearance.

III. **Hypocrisy is unprofitable.** A hypocrite's ingenuity does him no good; he only succeeds in making himself: (a) hated by God, who sees the heart and scrutinizes the conscience. A hypocrite does not make God the object of his actions, so God rejects him as an impostor; (b) despised by men, who for a time believed the hypocrite to be good, but afterwards found him out. His tricks are of no avail when shrewd or critical

persons begin to observe him, and he is looked upon as a mean and despicable rogue; (c) put to shame before God and men. He has tried to escape detection in this life, but at the last day all will be laid bare, and he will be put to shame. Loyalty and justice should impel us to be straightforward and genuine in all that we do.

Alternative Plan

A Good Example

There are no bad trees in the garden of Holy Church, but good Catholics abound, and each edifies others. *Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo.* Each one sets and receives a good example.

I. **Setting a good example.** It is our duty to edify others, no matter what our station in life, by making a good use of our talents. If we fail to do so, we commit a sin that may amount to actual scandal. Thus for our own sake we must set a good example, and we must do so also for the sake of others—think of the force of example, its consequences, its lasting effects. Moreover a man who sets a good example does credit to his religion, and faithful Christians prevent much evil and are the support of the Church.

II. **Accepting a good example.** This is a grace that is unmistakable; we ought to follow it and not to criticize the good. It is convincing, since it shows us that it is possible to be good. Everywhere we meet with good examples; the evil spirit misrepresents them, but resistance to them only proves their worth.

Peroration.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

WORKS OF MERCY

The unjust steward."—Luke xvi. 1-9.

The rich man—God—called his servants to give in their accounts, and the steward made friends for himself at his

master's expense. Let us transform the gifts that God has given us into good works towards our neighbor. They will then become our glory, riches, and joy.

I. **True glory.** The haughty fear to lower themselves by being kind to those about them, although they might thus gain honor and merit. For love of whom should they lower themselves? Good works ought to be done for God's sake. In this way they will follow our Lord's example, for He washed the feet of all His apostles, including Judas (John xiii. 5). None of us can be compared with the Son of God. Away with pride and dignity. In all His works our Lord humbled Himself, but, when we do good works, we do them to our neighbors, our equals. We have one Father—*Pater noster.* The thought of God uplifts us: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. xxv. 40). Many of the saints have served Christ in the persons of the poor, whom they tended.

II. **True riches.** Our Lord said: "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over . . . with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke vii. 38). Such is the return promised to charity, but there are other results. The principle is: "Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins" (Ecclus. iii. 33). "He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none" (Luke iii. 11). As an instance of the reward, the angel said to Tobias (xii. 12): "When thou didst bury the dead, . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord."

III. **True joy.** The unfortunate are our brethren—poverty and affliction are trials, not sins. Those even, who have committed offences against God and society, may be less guilty than we are in His sight. All are called to repent. It is a real pleasure to alleviate the lot of another, and God judges those severely who refuse to do so. St. Bernard heard the poor calling to the rich: "What you fritter and waste belongs to us; you cruelly deprive us of what you spend on trifles." A wealthy man ought to be the helper of the poor. An alms given, a service rendered, a word of advice spoken is some-

times productive of great results. Men have thereby been saved from despair.

Peroration. Since works of mercy are our glory, riches and joy, let us have compassion on our neighbor's needs.

Alternative Plan

Good Works

Two points. (1) God is just, and makes our sanctification contingent upon good works; hence we must do such works in order to live as true Christians. (2) God is good, and promises heaven as the reward of good works; hence we must do such works in order to secure our salvation.

I. **God's gifts demand our good works.** Consider divine grace (a) in its origin—Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Sanctifier, implants in us virtues that are meritorious; (b) in its models—the saints of every age and kind. "Faith without works is dead"; (c) in its types and symbols—springing water —a seed in our heavenly Father's hand.

II. **Neglect of good works excludes men from heaven.** It is not enough to say: "I do no harm"; you ought to do good. Three kinds of Christians: (a) some do good works, and grace makes them meritorious; (b) some do bad works—their fruits are wild and bitter, like those of the tree that is fit only to be burnt; (c) some do no works at all, either good or bad—these useless people resemble the barren fig tree which our Saviour cursed.

Peroration. Cast off sloth and remember that, although men may be satisfied with ordinary respectability, God requires of us the active practice of virtue.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

REVERENCE FOR GOD'S GRACE AND HIS HOUSE

"And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it."—LUKE xix. 41.

There are two special points in to-day's gospel: our Lord came, but "thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." He declared: "My house is the house of prayer." When God gives us His grace, He comes to us; the Church is His house, which we ought to reverence.

I. **God comes to us in His grace.** When we culpably reject the call of grace, we are wanting in fidelity and sin against faith; and neglect of grace incurs punishment. We fail in fidelity to grace for three reasons: (a) we make light of it. Our Lord says: "If thou hadst known!" Every Christian ought to understand the necessity of grace, its rapid action and its worth. (b) We are idle, indifferent and sluggish; we may exert ourselves for our friends, but we are too lazy to trouble about God. (c) We are wicked and stubborn, like the Jews of old; but with our knowledge of religion we ought to refrain from sin. The punishment of infidelity to grace has two stages: "Now they are hidden from thy eyes" is the first; "Thy enemies shall compass thee round" is the second. So when we resist God and His grace, we fail to notice the weakening of our spiritual life—this is the first disaster—and become the playthings of the enemy of our souls—this is the second. "They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone"—all our merit will be lost.

III. **Reverence for churches.** Disrespect is an insult to God, whom we ought to honor, especially in a building where: (a) Jesus Christ is on the altar. (b) Our Lord offers Himself in sacrifice. Laughter and foolish conversation are out of place. (c) Our Lord bestows His graces; do not despise His goodness or overlook His presence.

Disrespect is a sin in a place where we ought to be at our best; we ought to pray, but give way to distractions; we ought

to gain instruction, since everything tends to teach us, but we are careless and indifferent; we ought to sanctify ourselves by confession, Communion and holy Mass, but we are guilty of many faults.

Disrespect scandalizes others in the very place where it behooves us to edify them. A fervent Catholic may be trying to pray with fervor, and is distracted by the behavior of people near him. An indifferent Catholic may be inclined to improve, but sees that the conduct of others does no credit to their religious profession. A bad Catholic might be converted, but the indifference of the majority stifles the voice of divine grace within him.

Peroration. God calls us to live as true Christians; let us go to Him with all sincerity and pray fervently at church, since He is there present.

Alternative Plan

Remorse of Conscience

"If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace."—Luke xix. 42.

Sorrow for sin is a grace from God. Two points: divine mercy gives it; human wickedness refuses it.

I. **God's mercy** bestows upon us (a) grace as an aid to conversion; (b) interior grace, which is God's voice speaking to our hearts; (c) preventing grace, the first that is given to a sinner; (d) most wonderful grace, given by God because of sin; (e) grace most worthy of God, who acts as Ruler, threatening us with His justice; (f) grace most active, that follows us everywhere and in spite of all opposition; (g) grace most universal, since all men should repent of their sins; (h) grace least liable to the illusions which the devil devises as hindrances to our conversion; (i) grace which imparts efficacy to God's other gifts and renews our store of merit; (j) grace which inclines men to do penance and is the first pledge of it; (k) grace that influences our hearts and is the beginning of every conversion.

II. **Human wickedness** refuses to accept God's grace. (a) Resistance to grace is resistance to the call of the Holy Spirit. (b) It dries up all the fountains of divine mercy. (c) It aggravates our sins and our guilt. (d) It is a grievous insult to our merciful God. (e) It is the outcome of long-standing and almost insuperable malice. (f) It is an acknowledgment that we belong to the class of the wicked. (g) It is a step in the direction of despair. (h) It puts the seal on our condemnation.

Peroration. The sinner who resists God's grace, fights against God. It is far better to follow the call of grace; better to love God for His mercy than to fear His judgments.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

"Two men went up to the temple to pray."—Luke xviii. 10.

Two extremes: pride that exalts and humility that abases. The Pharisee would not so much as bend his knee before God; the Publican would not even lift up his eyes.

I. **Who are these men?** The Pharisee is well instructed in the law and professes great virtue; men admire his honesty and austerity. He resembles many worldly people at the present day, who forget the qualities that characterize true servants of God.

The Publican is a man of lower rank; men do not think much of him, but regard him as dishonest. The publicans were tax-collectors and oppressed the Jews, and were always unpopular. These two men went up to the Temple, with totally different dispositions. God could read their thoughts. Which do we resemble?

II. **The Pharisee's prayer.** Was it a prayer at all? "I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men." He praises himself for his goodness and freedom from sin. He did not thank God for giving him grace to sustain him, good inspirations to enlighten him, and knowledge to guide him. He

did not acknowledge that he owed everything to God, and could do nothing without Him. On the contrary, he boasted of his goodness, and seemed to say that no one served God so loyally as he did. We are not bound to reveal our faults to our neighbors, but we must not deceive our conscience, or try to mislead God.

III. **The Publican's prayer.** The publican hardly dared to enter the Temple, but stood at the back, thinking himself unworthy to appear before God or to mix with other worshippers. He did not look up, for he was aware of his sins and feared God's anger. He beat his breast in acknowledgment of his guilt and of the hardness of his heart. He prayed for mercy. He was a true penitent and set all his hopes upon God. "I am a sinner." Each of us may say the same.

IV. **Our Lord's comment.** The Pharisee was condemned, for God is not deceived by pride and pretended virtue. The man had no doubt avoided many sins, but not through possessing the spirit of faith. He had practiced certain virtues, but his ostentation robbed them of all merit, and so his hands were empty. Is that the case with us also? The Publican was justified, because his confession was humble and sincere; let us take it as a model. *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.*

Alternative Plan

Self-satisfaction

"To some who trusted in themselves as just and despised others, He spoke this parable."—Luke xviii. 9.

Besides thinking of the Pharisee and the Publican, we may go on and think of ourselves. Few of us resemble the Publican; too many of us possess the faults of the Pharisee without even having his outward virtues.

I. In one who is proud, **self-satisfaction is the most misleading of all passions.** Its presence should be suspected when a man misses no opportunity of making others compliment him; when he shrinks from no difficulties if only he can

attract notice; and when he is never satisfied unless he can assert his superiority.

II. **Self-satisfaction is unjust.** It is unjust towards God, the author of all goodness; towards our neighbor, with whom we compare ourselves unfairly for we have no self knowledge and extol ourselves, whilst others judge us.

III. **Self-satisfaction is disastrous.** It is the ruin of all virtue, since man seeks his reward in self and gains no merit. It is the source of all sin, since a man trusts in self and falls. It leads to impenitence, for, when we are unaware of our faults, we cannot correct them.

Peroration. Self-examination, self-abhorrence, amendment.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN

"Thence He went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."—Mark vii. 24.

As our Lord passed by, a deaf and dumb man was brought to Him. Never waste any of God's graces. The man is a type of those who are indifferent to religion, and also of the world which knows not God.

I. **Indifferent Christians.** Jesus was coming, and His fame had preceded Him. The man was deprived of two of His faculties, speech and hearing. Every Christian ought to listen to the sound of the church bell, the priest's voice and the teaching of his religion. Does he do so? In the spiritual sense he ought also to hear, understand, learn and act with the spirit of faith, omitting no point of doctrine or practice. He ought to speak, say his prayers, make his confession, acts before and after Holy Communion, good resolutions, etc. He should speak, too, in the spiritual sense, by putting into his words all his heart, piety, intelligence, will and love of God. Woe to him who is dumb in the confessional! The deaf and dumb man allowed himself to be brought to our Saviour, who took him aside (this was not His usual practice in curing the sick.) Thus the Word of God reaches your ears, you re-

ceive grace, and when you stand apart from the crowd you hear and understand what Christianity means. Our Lord groaned and then ordered the man to speak. The Church repeats His words to children, to people of every age, and to sinners. Who listens? Who invariably speaks right? Jesus "charged them that they should tell no man," but nevertheless they made known the miracle. So those who are converted make known God's mercy by their holy lives.

II. **The World** is deaf to God's truths; dumb concerning His works.

Deaf. *Aures habent et non audient* (Ps. 113). These words were spoken of false gods and their worshippers, when the world was pagan; but is it more eager nowadays to hear about religion? In order to teach men to know God, the Word became Flesh, and finally Christianity triumphed, but men are now relapsing into deafness.

Dumb. *Os habent et non loquentur* (Ps. 113). False deities of antiquity, irreligious philosophers, ignorant multitudes. But at the present time good Catholics are silent in society, they grow dumb through human respect, indifference, cowardice and persecution. Our Lord gave true doctrines to His disciples of old, and the Church has preserved the same in every age; but what is becoming of these doctrines now at the hands of rulers, boards of education and nations?

Peroration. Let us go to Jesus for instruction; His words and precepts teach us how to live as Christians and as members of society. He is the way, the truth and the life.

Alternative Plan

Dumbness

Dumbness is of two kinds, individual and social.

I. **Individual.** A man may be deaf to the voice of conscience, to the sound of the church bell on Sunday, to the advice of parents and friends, to instructions at church, to lessons taught by public events, sickness and death. He may be dumb when he ought to pray in the morning and at night, at Holy Mass,

and at the time for his Easter confession. Our Lord said but one word, *Ephpheta,* and the man was cured. So ought you to open your ears and listen to God and the Church, and open your lips to speak words befitting a Christian.

II. **Social.** We often fail in our duty to others by keeping silence. In family life, when we should correct others by a hint, a word of advice or a good example. Masters should watch over their workpeople, who are not merely living machines. Parents are responsible for their children, over whom they have real authority, being appointed to co-operate with God, and guard the spiritual as well as the temporal interests of the household. Are you deaf and dumb towards your priests? They are ready to listen to you and to advise and instruct you; but do you accept their advice? Are you absent from the confessional? From the Holy Sacrifice? Do you ever attend to the sermons that are preached?

Christianity is losing its hold upon the nation, and yet history teaches us what great benefits result from religion. Why are we false to the traditions of our fathers and to our duties towards God? Why do we raise no protest against bad books and papers, and irreligious conversations? Why are we deaf to the call of our leaders, to our Christian principles, to the claims of religion and morality?

Peroration. We must amend our ways; we are urged to reform by the voice of God and of our country, our family interests and our own, our future destiny, our Christian profession and our desire for salvation.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"The Good Samaritan."—Luke x. 23-37.

The Jews and Samaritans were neighbors, but most hostile to one another; hence the charity displayed by the Samaritan is truly great and wonderful. It teaches us that every one with whom we come in contact has a right to charitable treatment on our part.

I. **When charity puts forward its claim, our personal interests must give way.** Charity is a union of hearts and wills. It prevents any desire to do harm and makes us wish well to others, and actually do them good. Christian charity is the result of union with our divine Lord, who teaches us to love others as He loved us. He sacrified Himself for us; He showed true benevolence. According to our position and rank in life, certain obligations are laid upon us by charity; we may have to renounce our property, rights, good reputation, and even life itself. When men are lacking in charity they are selfish, proud, mean and careless about all that affects their neighbors' spiritual and temporal welfare.

II. **Our neighbors have a right to our charity**—our duties towards another are proportionate to his claim upon us. If he had no need of us, we should not be bound to do anything for him; but where his interests demand our help, even in a slight degree, it is really an important matter, and we should do wrong, were we to disregard them. Charity that is given in the wrong way and grudgingly received, is imperfect. The Samaritan found a stranger lying half dead by the roadside, and did all in his power for him; he lifted him up, took him to an inn, attended to his injuries and paid his bill. Do we follow his example, at least to some extent?

Alternative Plan

Almsgiving

I. Its obligation. II. Its advantages.

I. **Its obligation.** We are bound to open (a) our *eyes* to the needs of the poor, to seek out, listen to and console the miserable. (b) Our *hearts;* not to be lacking in sympathy or to hurt their feelings, for this would render us guilty in God's sight and would disgrace the Church who inculcates works of mercy. (c) Our *hands,* as our Lord did, for He gave and induced others to give to all—according to their needs—with discrimination.

Objections. You have not enough money for almsgiving—there are so many poor—times are bad—the poor are so exacting

and not as badly off as they pretend to be—many are afraid of work—you supply work to some who really need it. (Suggest answers to these objections.)

II. Its advantages. (1) It secures you temporal benefits; God gives to the merciful; many instances of this in Holy Scripture; experience proves it; examples of it abound. Do not say that generous people are often severely tried; *oportuit Christum pati, et ita intrare in gloriam.* (2) It obtains for you grace and salvation. Almsgiving "covereth a multitude of sins"; is a source of divine blessing; sanctifies our wealth; resembles one of God's attributes: *Bonum diffusivum sui;* will greatly affect the sentence passed upon us at the last day.

How ought we to give alms? Sometimes openly, for the edification of others, though without ostentation; sometimes secretly, to avoid any admixture of pride; always out of what strictly belongs to you.

Peroration. There is no doubt about the obligation and advantages of almsgiving; obey God, have pity upon your neighbor, and labor for the welfare of your own soul.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE TEN LEPERS

"*The ten lepers.*—Luke xvii. 11-19.

Throughout the Gospels we read of miraculous cures wrought on the blind, deaf, dumb, lame and palsied. In each case we can discover a mystery and a lesson. To-day we hear of ten lepers who were cleansed, and only one of them, a Samaritan, was grateful.

I. Leprosy. A hideous disease, which caused the sufferers to be driven out from their homes and dwelling places. A leper is a type of a sinner, who strays along the by-paths of his own passions, far from the children of the Church and the Holy Eucharist. His way of life, his example and all intercourse with him are harmful to good people. Are we not spiritual lepers? Leprosy attacks our hearts, the faculties of

our souls, and turns us astray from the road to our heavenly home . . . but God sends us His grace; we cry out to Him in our misery, and He says: "Go to the priests and to the sacraments." This is the law, even where contrition is perfect. Do not argue that you are respectable and that your life is blameless. What does God think of it? Obey His orders, and go to the priests and the sacraments.

II. Ten lepers were cleansed, but **only one returned to thank our Lord.** Even among savages ingratitude is regarded as shameful. Are we grateful to God? "Where are the nine?" When you are in trouble, you cry out to God; when He has helped you, do you serve Him more faithfully? The grateful man was a Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans. "The Jews did not communicate with the Samaritans" (John iv. 9), but, in the case of the lepers, their common misfortune had brought them together. For 1500 years God had lavished His favors upon the Jews, but the nine were ungrateful. Those who receive most from God are very apt to forget Him, whereas a stranger or a convert often shows more zeal in His service.

Peroration. Religion has cured us of leprosy of heart, mind and soul; let us return to Jesus, and live as Christians in this world, for such a life is a pledge of immortality.

Alternative Plan

The Reward of Faith

The ten lepers had plenty of faith and recognized our Lord's power; but only one, not a Jew, was grateful, and lifted up his heart to God. Even after his recovery and his return to the society of his fellow men, he proved his faith. Three points:

I. **Faith steadies the mind by its authority,** which stands firm when examined by the light of conscience, reason and learning. It is unquestionable, because it comes from God; universal, since it is held by persons of every age and rank;

prophesies, miracles and martyrs bear witness to it; it dispels all doubts and enlightens the mind; it is supreme, inasmuch as it reaches to God; unchanging, in spite of the world, false doctrines and spirits of evil; infallible, for it is based on God's omniscience, it enjoys the help of the Holy Spirit and remains for ever in the Church.

II. **Faith by its purity governs our hearts.** It teaches us our duties towards ourselves, our neighbors and God; it condemns our vices, encourages our virtues, and leads us to heaven.

III. **Faith by its stability comforts our souls.** Consolation offered by the world consists merely of phrases, and is worthless. The comfort afforded by faith is wise; it diminishes our sufferings, increases our courage, gives us strength in time of trial, secures the triumph of martyrs, and disposes God to help us. Examples of the power of faith abound.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

TWO MASTERS

"*No man can serve two masters.*"—Matt. vi. 24.

This is a great lesson, which is well understood in ordinary life, though it is forgotten by many professing to be Christians. When it is a question of serving God or the world, we find that there are two standards in use. Which of the two masters will you obey? This is a very important matter.

I. **The world.** Its partisans tell us that it is easy to adopt and be guided by its principles; its adversaries maintain that these principles are false and involve death everlasting. Young men forget their first Communion, and fancy that at their age they have a right to enjoy life; but our Saviour bids them be vigilant, practice virtue and deny themselves. Young girls think a great deal of entertainments, and forget that they are beset with temptations. Our Saviour says that nothing but bitterness will result in the future from worldly amusements.

Our divine Lord and the world are opposed in their principles, maxims and opinions. Will you believe in men's illusions or in God's revelation? The world blinds its adherents, but the Gospel promises heaven to the just. Compare the best people in the world with the saints of God. You profess to be good Catholics, but you are too easily influenced by worldly ideas, and you often forget our Lord.

II. **God.** Two things lead men back to God—the world may cease to care for them, and they may be disgusted with the world. In the first case they are left without merit; in the second, they simply awake from their illusions; but there is a third way; they may return to God for His own sake. In time a child forsakes his games, a young man abandons his pleasures, a middle-aged man devotes himself to business, and an old man finds out that everything passes away. And so the end comes. When will you give yourselves to God? Our Lord said: *Relinquo mundum, vado ad Patrem* (John xvi. 28). Can you say the same? God is our judge as well as our Father. Will He say: *Nescio vos; mittite in tenebras exteriores?* It may well be so, unless we use the things of earth in His service. The world is undergoing a great revolution and society is splitting up. The world would fain exclude God from men's souls, minds, hearts and wills; many think of nothing save how to serve it, but it will pass away and God alone will remain. Let us do our duty in our family life and in society, but let us do it always in accordance with His law.

Alternative Plan

God Alone is our Master

Being our Master, God orders all the circumstances of our lives, and acts as our Providence and Father.

I. **God, our Providence.** He shows Himself as such in His gifts. His goodness is proclaimed on every page of the Bible, extolled by the saints, recognized by pagans, loved by Christians, and manifested everywhere and in all things. Men who combat it are fools; in vain do they boast of their cleverness,

ascribe their success to themselves and forget God. The truth cannot be suppressed. God's Providence is adorable in all its ordinances; if the conditions of life are unequal, it acts with a view to the general good; in dealing with the just and the wicked, it orders events with a view to eternity. In every case it purifies the charity of the just, rewards only the social virtues of the wicked, and proves the immortality of the soul. It is unchanging in its decrees; all men are liable to trials; all the events of history reveal the action of divine Providence.

II. **God, our Father.** When we murmur against God, we are guilty of (a) great injustice, for we have no right to His gifts, and adversity is profitable to us for various reasons; (b) shameful ingratitude, since some gifts would prove harmful, if we received them, and we learn perseverance when they are withheld; (c) extraordinary rashness. Let us consider what we ought to do, and what to avoid, remembering that no arguments have any weight in opposition to God.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE WIDOW OF NAIM

"He went into a city that is called Naim."—Luke vii. 11.

The persons to consider, the young man, his mother and the crowd, our divine Lord.

I. **The young man.** He was at the age when life seems full of golden prospects; an only son, the sole object of his mother's affection, the hope of his family, and heir to all the hopes that had centered upon his father. He was the son of a widow, her bread winner and comfort, and she looked upon him as the support of her old age, now that her husband was dead. He was borne out followed by a great multitude, so he was justly regretted and his death caused universal sorrow.

Why did he die? God could have spared him for many years, and his mother needed him. Yet God often takes the good and leaves the useless. In this case a miracle was to be worked. Let us learn that God may strike, but He never

forsakes us; He does not judge as we do; we often abuse His gifts and He wishes to teach families a lesson; the trial was necessary. God foresees how we should act in the future, and in His mercy renders it impossible.

II. **The mother and the crowd.** The mother followed the bier weeping but resigned to God's will; she laid her future in His hands. A great crowd had assembled to show respect to the family, sorrow for the dead man and sympathy with his mother. Commentators regard the young man as a type of a soul in the state of sin; his mother as that of the Church bewailing the sinful soul and wishing to restore it to spiritual life; the crowd as representing the meritorious works of the just and their good example to sinners.

III. **Our divine Lord** stopped the funeral procession. So His grace checks a sinner who is on the path of iniquity, and for whom there would be no return from hell. He was moved with compassion—death is so terrible. So He feels pity for the sinner, whose soul is being lost. He called the dead man—great power is needed to effect the resurrection of the dead, and extraordinary graces are required if a sinner's conversion is to be complete. He lifted him up—it is useless to have one's eyes open, if one does not move and resume one's ordinary occupations. He gave him to his mother—tears of joy now—return to the life of a Christian.

Peroration. Application, details, practical resolutions.

Alternative Plan

Death and Resurrection

I. **Death.** The young man of Naim must have died the death of the righteous, otherwise our Lord would not have intervened. Death is inevitable; our death sentence is irrevocable, admits of no mitigation, but is always carried out. Our end is uncertain; we know not when, how, or in what dispositions we shall die. Death makes us take a correct view of the illusions and errors of the world, and cuts us off from its allurements that corrupt, weaken and distract us.

II. **Resurrection.** No one can rise again without God, who is supreme over life and death. In the Gospels we read of many miracles, but only three times of resurrection from the dead. Notice here the faith of the bystanders, the mother's resignation, the young man's previous good works, and the hope felt by all at sight of our Lord. Peculiar circumstances of the miracle.

Peroration. Prayer to Christ, who is so good to those that are spiritually dead. Practical resolutions.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY

"Jesus went into the house . . . on the Sabbath day."—Luke xiv. 1.

The Pharisees watched our Lord critically—they thought that He intended to heal a sick man on the day of rest. Works of mercy do not belong to the same category as servile work. Three points: the letter, spirit and object of the commandment.

I. **The letter of the commandment.** Difference between weekdays and Sunday. All nations divided days into weeks. Confucius: "Thou shalt honor the supreme Unity every seventh day." The Phœnicians: "Every seventh day is consecrated to the worship of Saturn, the father of the gods." Homer: "Do not fail to reverence the seventh day." the Druids: "Every seventh day is sacred." Divine promises: *Custodite sabbata mea . . . et dabo vobis pluvias temporibus suis, et terra gignet germen suum* (Lev. xxvi. 2-4). All profanation of the Sabbath was forbidden. *Omne opus servile non facietis in eo* (Lev. xxiii. 21). Poverty is no excuse; the law is binding upon all. God knew that there were poor, but they too need rest and sanctification. Masters, give your servants time to rest. The need of earning on Sunday is no excuse. Do you spend the whole of your wages every day? Has God promised you unlimited strength? Do you really pass the entire week in work? At the time of the French Revolution in 1793

an unsuccessful attempt was made to substitute the observance of Decadi, every tenth day for that of Sunday.

II. **The spirit of the commandment.** We should live as Christians every day, but God desires the seventh day to be devoted to His service and to our spiritual advantage. Refrain from servile work. Sunday is the day when most sin is committed. People spend the morning in work, although they are bound to hear Mass. They might spend a little time in prayer during the afternoon, but that is the time for parties and amusement. Others commit their worst sins only on Sunday. St. Antoninus of Florence said that some put Satan in the place of God.

III. **Object of the commandment.** The observance of Sunday is, not merely a matter of rest, nor of being inactive in mind and body, nor of going for walks and excursions, nor of meeting our friends and relatives—we are commanded to do good works for our neighbors, ourselves and God. Among these works are fervent prayer at home; presence at public worship, visits to the sick and afflicted, instruction of the ignorant and abandoned. Idleness is opposed to the proper observance of Sunday. It is a serious matter to live without religion and to abstain from all public worship and to observe only the holidays ordered by the State. *Odi et projeci festivitates vestras* (Amos v. 21). Non-observance of Sunday causes men to commit actual sin, and also to sin by omission to fulfil their Sunday duty.

Alternative Plan

Pride and Humility

"He spoke a parable . . . marking how they chose the first seats at the table."—Luke xiv. 7.

It is not for you, but for your host, to choose your place. God knows us, and we may be very insignificant in His sight.

I. **Pride.** What are we? Remember the lowliness of our origin, the weakness of our minds, the corruption of our hearts, the uncertainty of our destiny. What grounds have

we for pride? They are imaginary, false, disastrous. A proud man fancies (a) that he is the author of what he possesses—he is blind; (b) that he has a right to what he has—he is presumptuous; (c) that he can boast of what is not really his—he is an impostor; (d) that he can win admiration for qualities that he does not possess—he acts unjustly towards others. Pride has three effects: it wounds the hearts, tarnishes the intellect, and diminishes the worth of men.

II. **Humility** prevents our having too high an opinion of ourselves, helps us to bear the censure of others; makes us refer to God all that is good in ourselves. Humility is necessary, enjoined by Jesus Christ. It is our duty to know ourselves and consult our real interests. Humility helps us to resist temptation and to gain merit by the practice of virtue. It checks our complaints about what we do not possess and what we have lost. It prevents us from looking upon our equals as rivals. It makes us kindly in our dealings with others. It teaches us to be modest when we are successful, and to avoid ridiculous affectations that might annoy others.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"—Matt. xxii. 36.

In answer to the Pharisee's question our Lord spoke of love of God and our neighbor, and then went on to declare Himself to be the Messias, the Son of David.

I. **Love of God**—the greatest and the first commandment. Charity is a supernatural virtue by which we sincerely love God for His own sake. It is a special virtue, that continues to exist in heaven. It is the model and form of all other virtues, and without it no merit is possible. Supernatural, i.e., divinely infused, proceeding neither from the senses nor from the reason, but from the will, which desires to cling to the supreme Good. God has bestowed upon us natural and spiritual benefits, and promised us eternal happiness. He is

above all, Creator of all; He contains in Himself all that is most beautiful and perfect. Our own interest constrains us to love Him sincerely for His own sake. He loved us first. He is our Creator, our benefactor, our preserver; to Him we owe our perfection in holiness and our hope of heaven.

II. **Love of our neighbor**—the second commandment, which is like unto the first: "On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." Charity does not extend to irrational creatures, because they are not made, as we are, in the image of God, but we owe it to our neighbors, even though they be sinners and our enemies. Why is this? Because God is their Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier and Reward as He is ours. *Pater noster.* Our neighbors are Christians and are called equally to perfection. Our love for them must be (a) sincere, not merely on the surface; (b) practical, manifesting itself in good works, not a barren profession of friendship; (c) pure and disinterested, without hypocrisy.

III. **Jesus Christ, the Messias, Son of David.** Two of the evangelists give genealogies showing that our Lord was descended from David. This was universally known, and the sick and afflicted addressed Him as "Son of David." On Palm Sunday all the people cried: *Hosanna Filio David.* The prophets had foretold the time when the Messias should come, the chief facts of His life, His miraculous powers, His death and resurrection. The scribes and Pharisees were losing all their influence with the people; they were struck by the extraordinary features in our Lord's life and tried to criticize Him, but they exerted themselves in vain; they were invariably proved to be wrong. Thus to-day's gospel teaches us to love God and our neighbor, and to serve our divine Lord. If we do this, we shall be true Christians.

Alternative Plan

Two parts: (1) The Pharisees try to embarrass our Lord by their questions, to which He gives replies. (2) He questions the Pharisees and puts them to confusion.

I. **The Pharisees question our Lord.** One of them, a doctor

of the law, asks the vital question . . . he ought to know the answer, being a teacher, not a learner. Our Lord deigns to reply, and speaks of the love of God and of our neighbor. Love of God must be "with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind"; it must be unique in its intensity. But comparison is possible with regard to love of our neighbor. Love him "as thyself." These two commandments contain everything. (Explanation easy.) The doctor can find nothing to say, but is overpowered by our Lord's argument.

II. **Our Lord questions the Pharisee.** He might have said: "The chief commandment of the law is to hear me," for His marvelous deeds put Him far above all other men. Indirectly He suggested this thought by asking: "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he?" It was quite plain that He fulfilled the prophesies. The Pharisees answered: "David's." The sick whom He had miraculously cured called Him Son of David, and on Palm Sunday the crowd cried: Hosanna to the Son of David. Then our Lord referred to Psalm 108: *Dixit Dominus Domino meo* . . . Christ, though descended from David, was his Lord. This was equivalent to saying that He was divine as well as human, or to proclaiming Himself to be the Messias, and condemning the Pharisees for their opposition to Him. They were silent, and dared not ask any more questions. On another occasion Jesus said: *Creditis in Deum, et in me credite* (John xiv. 1). Faith in Him is ignored or denied by many and persecuted by others; a great many people fail to practice their religion.

Peroration. The lesson taught by our divine Lord enlightens our hearts and minds, benefits our souls and is indispensable to our salvation.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MAN SICK OF THE PALSY

"And entering into a boat, He passed over the water."—MATT. ix. 1.

Three parts: our Lord's arrival, the palsied man and the Pharisees, the results.

I. **Our Lord's arrival.** He crossed the lake in a boat, reached the town and met the sick man. So Jesus came down from heaven and lived among men; He is ready to cure us. The palsied man is a type of the human race—the world was full of vice and error, unable to go to God, but Christ came to instruct, redeem and sanctify us. Sinners are spiritually diseased, and He bids us labor for their conversion, to be zealous in order to please God, to persevere in order to gain merit.

II. **The palsied man and the Pharisees.** Our Lord began by forgiving the man's sins, but the cure of his soul was followed immediately by that of his body. "Be of good heart, son." We, too, are God's children—the grace of conversion will be given us—let us hope with confidence for forgiveness. Christ reproached the scribes and Pharisees with thinking evil of Him; He teaches us to distrust our ignorant prejudices, our passions which make us unjust, our faults of character that prevent us from forming a fair judgment of the good works of others.

III. **The results.** In His mercy our Lord said to the man: "Arise, take up thy bed." He had been carried, now he was to carry. Let us listen to the call of grace and overcome all our hindrances. "Go into thy house." Children of God, return to the Church and to the practice of your religion. If we are to be converted, we must arise from the depths to which sin has reduced us, and turn to God; we must conquer our bad habits and fight against our tendency to sin, and we must go back and live as good Catholics, allowing no disorder in our prayers, actions and affections. The multitude glorified God—let us too glorify Him by our virtuous lives and good works.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son."—MATT. xxii. 2.

It seems incredible that the invited guests should refuse to come, and that others had to be fetched from the highways. God sent His Son to call men to Him, but many refuse to hear Him, and even some of those who hear Him are wanting in the spirit of faith and charity. Moreover, God gives us the benefits of His holy religion, but many care nothing for His ministers or rebel against them.

I. **God's benefits.** A great outcry is raised against religion, and the Church, like her divine Founder, asks: *Propter quod me vultis occidere?* She was given by God to men that they might have spiritual life and eternal glory. Hers is not merely human authority; her task is to civilize and raise mankind; she is the guardian of the faith and of all virtues. God sent His Son into the world, and "His own received Him not." The invited guests would not come to the feast. He came to teach (a) each individual that his soul was made for truth and heaven, (b) each family that He ennobled family life, giving dignity to the wife and authority to the husband, such authority to be used in accordance with justice and mercy. He came to deliver society from paganism and to make known a God of goodness and love. He gave the nations His gospel to civilize them and His commandments to make them happy. There is not a vice which He does not forbid, nor a virtue which He does not help us to acquire.

II. **The enemies of God.** The invited guests refused to come, and went "one to his farm and another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hands on his servants, and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death." They showed disdain and hatred, made false excuses, and stirred up bloody persecutions. Our Lord taught and healed the people, but was put to death. All the apostles were martyrs, and during

the first three centuries there were horrible persecutions. In every age there have been heresies, apostasies, schisms and prosecutions, and yet the Church has continued her work, in spite of encountering opposition everywhere. The king of heaven has had other servants, who have appealed to men of every class. . . . The haughty philosophers, who refused to submit to the Church, are forced to acknowledge that she is still alive, that God is still loved, and His followers continue to serve Him. The mighty of this world may try to crush the religious Orders, persecutors of every race may do their worst—they will all pass away, and the Church will live on always.

Alternative Plan

The Dignity of the Christian

Two passages in to-day's gospel: "They that were invited were not worthy." "How camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?" There is an important lesson here:

I. Our dignity is derived **from our union with Christ** in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus, God and Man, the Eternal Word, was announced by all the prophets as the Messias. He is great in His active ministry, His miracles, His resurrection and as Founder of the Church. He governs by His word, sanctifies by His sacraments; He remains with us in the tabernacle, on the altar and in Holy Communion.

II. Our dignity is derived **from our Lord's greatness.** He is great in His divinity, Son of God, the Word by whom all things were made. He is great in His humanity—honored at His birth, baptism, transfiguration and resurrection; great, too, in His miracles. The humiliations heaped upon Him turned to the confusion of His enemies.

III. Our dignity is derived **from the benefits of Christianity.** The spirit of Christ exalts His followers even in their humiliations and misfortunes, in the practice of virtue and in the strength of their souls.

Peroration. Three grounds for dignity—let us find courage and consolation therein.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CENTURION AT CAPHARNAUM

Gospel for the day.—JOHN iv. 46-53.

The centurion believed in our Lord's power, but his faith was imperfect, for he asked Him to come to his house and cure the dying man. Our Saviour did not go, but cured him from a distance; then the centurion believed and went away. On the road he met his servants coming to bring news of the cure, and ascertained that it had been effected at the moment when Jesus had assured him that his son would live.

From this brief outline (which may be developed) we may derive a special lesson on practical faith.

I. **Imperfect faith**—when we believe *what* we please; whereas we ought to believe that God can do anything by His word and power, and we must not limit His greatness. When we believe *as* we please. The early Christians did not shrink from retirement, modesty, deprivation, fervor, good works or martyrdom; but we forget their examples, laugh at pious souls, disregard Sunday, etc. When we believe only *because* we please. Yet faith is not opposed to our interests and does not ask great sacrifices of us. It is our duty to overcome our false inclinations, wishes, pride and energy.

II. **Imperfection bordering upon sin.** (1) Unreasonableness is in opposition to our faith and works. It is termed folly in the Gospels and by the saints. Luke xii. 20, "Thou fool." Gal. iii. 1, "O senseless Galatians." St. John Chrysostom, *Voluntaria insania.* (2) Faithlessness, forgetfulness of promises made at baptism, in the confessional, at Holy Communion. False excuses—the attractiveness of amusements, the difficulty of virtue. (3) Hypocrisy—some pretend to have faith, but if they really possessed it, they would act differently. Their religion is a matter of outward display, and they show no genuine piety.

Peroration.

Alternative Plan

Religious Zeal

"He himself believed and his whole house."—John iv. 53.

These words show that the ruler and his family were full of gratitude towards God and believed in Jesus Christ. Now, alas, how many people are ungrateful!

Two points. Our religion is true, so we should have true faith. It is holy, so we should obey its precepts.

I. **Our religion is true.** If we do not believe, we fail in our duty (a) towards God, who requires us to have faith; (b) towards the Church, which calls upon us to make public profession of our faith; (c) towards society, which we are bound to edify. Let us beware of dishonoring religion by scandals and jests, by indifference and neglect, by yielding to human respect.

II. **Our religion is holy.** By their sanctity the early Christians converted the pagans. Many people now transgress the commandments of the Gospel, and good Catholics are in the minority. Pluck up your courage and be true servants of God. Let us be as zealous for religion as we are for the honor of our families.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

THE SERVANT, AS DEBTOR AND AS CREDITOR

Gospel for the day.—Matt. xviii. 23-35.

A king wished to take account of his servants, one of whom owed him ten thousand talents. The master might have sold the man, but pitied him and forgave him the debt. Now the servant had a comrade who owed him only a hundred pence, and in order to recover the money, he cast the man into prison. Being denounced to his master, he was himself sold into slavery—this was simple justice.

God is the master and we are the servants indebted to Him, but we lead worthless lives, although we extort from our brethren whatever they may owe us.

I. **What is a worthless life?** It is a definite obstacle to heaven, which we gain only by means of virtue. It is a hindrance to grace, which we abandon whenever we waste our time on unprofitable things. It is opposed to our true interests, since it makes us neglect our duties. Listen to the words of Holy Scripture. Heaven is compared with a pearl of great price, a hidden treasure, a crown, the holy city. God does not bestow it upon the blind, careless, cowardly and idle. Consider the abuse of grace. An idler makes a bad use of his time, spending it upon frivolity, sleep, eating, amusements and dress, instead of upon necessary occupations, prayer, meditation and the sacraments. Examine your own duties; some are personal, and these are often neglected, prayer is forgotten, you stay away from church and put off or fail to go to your Easter Communion. Other duties affect your neighbors, you are careless about your obligations to your family and society.

II. **Even a laborious life is often worthless.** All our actions ought to be performed with a view to heaven. In choosing our state in life, do we ask ourselves whether we shall be able thus to work out our salvation? All our fatigue, work, vexations and successes ought to be sanctified, if they are to be meritorious in God's sight. How much merit is wasted! All our actions ought to be performed with the help of divine grace. If we are true to grace, we generally avoid sin, live as Christians, are strong at critical moments, do better work and follow the example of the saints. Moreover, our souls should be free from sin. Sin does not prevent good works, but their merit only disposes the soul to receive the grace of conversion. By such works we serve only the Church and society, but, when we are in the state of grace, their merit rises to heaven.

Peroration. Let yours be a living faith; let it not be said of you: *Nomen habes quod vivas, et mortuus es* (Apoc. iii. 1). Do not waste your life, but work zealously for God.

ALTERNATIVE PLAN

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

We are servants indebted to God. At the last hour He will call on us to render an account; the day of mercy is over. Two thoughts—the truth and justice of His judgment.

I. **Its truth.** When we refuse to make a thorough examination of our consciences, we deceive ourselves. The truth will convict us of many mistakes, (a) *of fact;* regarding our sins we ignore their consequences and effects, (b) *of right*, when our sins or obligations that we disregard cause us to be charged with injustice or bad faith. We may deceive those around us by our hypocrisy, but God will bring it to light, and our guardian angels will accuse us of our trickery, bad motives, fraud and false statements.

II. **Its justice.** There are three ways in which we are slack: (a) We know ourselves to be very indifferent Christians, yet we expect to be treated with consideration. (b) We know that we are sinners in God's sight, yet we wish the world to respect us. (c) We know that we deserve punishment, yet we claim indulgence.

God will judge us impartially; the leniency of our confessor will not be taken into account. God will care nothing for our refinement, and will even condemn us for it, when it is voluptuous.

Peroration. Let us attend to the state of our souls and judge ourselves. Whilst we are in this world, God will have mercy upon us; let us pray for mercy, and thus we shall obtain grace, the source of fresh merit.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FLATTERY

"Master, we know that thou art a true speaker."—MATT. xxii. 16.

The compliment paid by the Pharisees to our Lord was true, but their artifice is revealed by the whole style of their questions. They wished to ensnare Him in His speech. We all like being flattered. St. Ambrose says that a flatterer is guilty

of malice and deceit and the person flattered of pride and vanity. Hence both sin.

I. **Sin of the flatterer.** St. James calls the tongue *Universitas iniquitatis,* and our Saviour often asked the Pharisees: *Quid me tentatis, hypocritae?*

A hypocrite does not say what he thinks. He sets aside his own conviction in order to gratify the self-love of another. He is not straightforward in his actions, but, in his desire to flatter, he assumes a gay or mournful demeanor, and is at one moment merry, at another serious. He does violence to himself, reckoning upon the advantage that he will derive from it. He puts himself to much inconvenience in order to curry favor with others, declares a fool to be witty and admires badly brought-up children. He may be hypocritical in his intentions, and use equivocal language that will bear more than one interpretation, or he may be calculating in all that he says and does, and even when he keeps silence. The devil took the form of a serpent, whose coils are a type of the various devices of flattery. He suggests to misers that there is no harm in being careful, to spendthrifts that it is well not to seem stingy, to young girls going to dangerous entertainments that their modesty will be their safeguard, etc.

II. **Sin of the person flattered.** The Fathers tell us that a passion for flattery is naturally blind, always evil, and often very hard to satisfy. It is opposed to common sense and religion. As human beings we are worthless, and it behooves us Catholics to be humble. A passion for flattery is contrary to all virtue and a source of many sins; it shows exaggerated love of self, and makes us idolize ourselves. It is, as St. Augustine says, a deadly poison to the conscience.

Those who praise you only in order to flatter you are mean and despicable, dangerous friends who feed your vanity, false friends who think chiefly of their own interests. A money-lender feels the same sort of regard for his client as a vulture for its victim. Dalila and Samson (Judges xvi.).

Peroration. Is. iii. 12, "They that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee." Avoid the snares of flatterers and lift up your thoughts to God.

Alternative Plan

Our Social Duties

Two thoughts: obligations—duties performed especially by true Christians.

I. **Obligations.** Religion lays upon us certain social duties. A religion is inconceivable which did not touch upon men's mutual relations, or which would exempt them from everything laborious, or which was limited to the practice of individuals, or which ignored the fact that God's Providence watches over all equally. Our social duties are those of our state in life—fathers should be affectionate and careful for the welfare of their families, merchants honest and fair dealing, judges painstaking and impartial, employers kind and generous. No other obligation can dispense men from the fulfilment of these duties. It would be a false excuse to plead the claims of religion, nor can caprice, self-interest, obstinacy or spite be made pretexts for any exemption. Persons who have received a special call from God may leave the world and live in humility, solitude, recollection and zeal. Thus also they benefit society.

II. **The best Christians are the best patriots.** (1) Religious principles are more efficacious than philosophy or philanthropy in urging men to do their duty. Religion teaches us to resist our passions, mortify our caprices, restrain our pride and avarice and increase our devotion. Our duty to society, properly understood, requires us to make these sacrifices. Those who sin against society are not Christians practicing their religion—this fact is proved by statistics. (2) Self interest guides men, and many social duties call for more exalted principles. In some circumstances our personal interest is unaffected, but that is no reason why we should neglect our duties, favor the wicked, oppress the good, refuse payment for service rendered, or judge our neighbor on mistaken principles. In other cases our personal interest would lead us to set our duties aside, to tolerate injustice, to refuse help to the poor, to suborn witnesses, to take part in riots, to break the

law, etc. (3) People confuse imaginary with real social duties. They try to adopt principles which seem to justify a breach of natural laws that are binding upon all men. A good Catholic is on his guard against this scandal. People try to gain acceptance for principles of injustice, but a good Catholic abides by the teachings of the Gospel. People talk about their honor, the enjoyment of life, etc., but a good Catholic knows that God is the judge of sentences passed by men.

Peroration. Respectability in the eyes of the world is a great point in social life, and Christians satisfy this requirement, but uprightness according to religion and God's law ought to be their guide and highest duty.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

THE THREE STATES OF THE SOUL

The raising of Jairus' daughter.—Matt. ix. 18-26.

Two miracles: the cure of the woman with the issue of blood and the raising of the dead girl. Taken together we have sickness, death and renewed life.

I. **The soul that is sick.** This soul may be compared with a body tortured by disease and pain. "Sanctity is the health of the soul." Venial sin is the malady. The woman had heard of our Lord, and being anxious to be cured, she ran to Him, made her way through the crowd, touched the hem of His garment with profound faith, and was cured. Our Lord questioned her, comforted her and praised her faith. How long have you been spiritually diseased? When did you come to Christ? If there is any intellectual error in your learning, any defect of will in your moral life, or of heart in your affections, it is useless for you to have recourse to argument or science—you need Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Cast aside your half-hearted prayers and devotions; tolerate no half measures; go straight ahead, overcome all difficulties, and come to our Lord with faith. You must have the will to do so.

II. **The soul that is dead.** A ruler of the synagogue. The story of the miracle. Natural death is only a sleep; the death

of the soul need not be permanent, if we have recourse to Jesus. Act like the ruler, come to the church, to the sacraments. "Come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." Mortal sin is an act of disobedience to God, it is contrary to the divine law. By committing it we shake off God's yoke, put creatures in the place of the Creator, and become slaves to the devil. "The soul is the life of the body, and God is the life of the soul" (St. Augustine). Sin is a daring revolt, an outrageous insult and ingratitude towards God.

Before raising the dead girl to life, our Lord turned out the noisy crowd—avoid uproarious gatherings. He perceived and expelled the musicians—do not allow the unmeaning noise of the world to influence you, and above all do not fear those who might criticize your conversion. "They laughed him to scorn." Have confidence in God and His grace: *Noli timere, tantum modo crede*—and then He will restore you to the state of grace.

III. **The soul that is cured and restored to life.** The woman cured of the issue of blood must have served God very faithfully for the rest of her life; the young girl must have loved her father for asking Jesus to work a miracle, and yet both the regained health and the restored life were lost at death. Be fervent, ye who have been brought back to grace; serve God, for this is your chief duty, and you will be entitled to enter heaven. By means of His sacraments our Lord heals us, raises us again to grace and sanctifies us. Let us be sincere, faithful, steadfast and grateful.

Peroration. Résumé. Three states of the soul. Avoid sin, rise again by way of penance, receive the living Bread at the altar; it is the pledge of eternal life and future glory.

Alternative Plan

Return to the State of Grace

In this gospel we read of the cure of a sick person and the raising of one who was dead. The former is a type of a soul that is lukewarm in God's service; the latter represents a soul

that has fallen from grace by mortal sin. In each case true life was restored by our Lord's mercy and power.

I. **Venial sin** (a) in its nature is an offence against God, and consequently ought not to be committed; it makes us unworthy of heaven, and if it is not expiated here, we shall have to suffer for it in purgatory. (b) In its multiplicity. We do not recognize it and fall into it without scruple; our lives may appear to be Christian, but they abound in faults; we commit venial sin through carelessness, culpable ignorance and often through wickedness. (c) In its results. It weakens the soul's power of resistance; it often leads to mortal sin and sometimes cannot be distinguished from it. Thus diseases lead to death.

II. **Mortal Sin.** (a) The only true evil. Our bodies are liable to corruption, hence we can understand pain, disease and death; but our souls were created for eternal life in heaven, and consequently death is contrary to their nature. The punishment of mortal sin: Lucifer was expelled from heaven, Adam from Paradise—this life is full of misery—our redemption on Calvary. (b) Mortal sin is the perpetual enemy of both God and man; it is the one great evil and has fatal results in this life and the next. It is God's enemy, since it is a violation of His law, an insult to Him, the means whereby He is deprived here on earth of the service of those whom He created, and in heaven of the glory that they might give Him. Sin is an enemy to man in his body, for it is the source of all suffering and death. It is his enemy in his soul, which loses all merits previously gained in the state of grace, and robs of their merit the good works which, but for sin, would have been performed in the state of grace. The only merit possible is that by good works a sinner is disposed to acept the grace of conversion.

(Short application to the gospel for the day.)

Peroration. O God, in Thy mercy Thou didst welcome the faith of the sick woman and of the dead girl's father; increase within us the spirit of faith, heal us, and bring us back to the life of grace. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE END OF THE WORLD

Gospel.—MATT. xxiv. 15-36.

Our Lord foretells here the destruction of Jerusalem, the rise of false Christs and false prophets, the signs that will announce the end of the world, the general resurrection and His own return as Judge.

Three points: the prophecies, the general resurrection, the judgment.

I. **The prophecies.** 1. The destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord had already said: "Thy enemies . . . shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone" (Luke xix. 43, 44). He spoke of the desolation, the flight of the inhabitants, and misery such as had never been known before (70 A.D.).

2. False Christs and false prophets. In the course of time there have been many heresies of all kinds, schisms, apostasies, false philosophies, persecutions, sacrileges and profanations of holy places.

3. The end of the world. Signs of the sun, moon, stars and powers of heaven. Coming of the Son of Man, lamentation among the nations, appearance of the angels.

II. **The general resurrection.** Announced by Ezechiel; foreshadowed by the raising to life of individuals in every age; foretold by Christ; effected by the ministry of angels. The reason for it: the body shares in good and evil actions; human nature requires its reunion with the soul; neither human nor divine justice distinguishes between body and soul when assigning punishments and rewards. The same body. With God all things are possible. "This corruptible must put on incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 53). Job exclaimed: "In my flesh I shall see my God" (xix. 26).

III. **The Judgment.** Jesus Christ will be the Judge: "He ascended into heaven, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." Leaning on His cross, the mark no longer of His shame, but of His glory, He will appear radiant with majesty and power. Then will he receive compensation

for His sufferings at the hand of Pilate and the humiliation of Calvary. The angels will open the book of conscience. "Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known" (Matt. x. 26). To the wicked the judgment will be terrible indeed. "He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils" (Prov. xxii. 8). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebr. x. 31). But the righteous will find consolation at the day of judgment. "The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). The sentence will for ever separate the good from the evil; relatives and friends will part, and in some cases those who once were accomplices in sin, if one has repented. Then will the Judge say: *Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum . . . Venite, benedicti Patris mei, possidere regnum.* Cries of despair will be uttered by the lost, as they are hurled by devils into hell, and the abyss closes over them. Songs of triumph will be raised by the elect, as the angels lead them to heaven.

Alternative Plan

The Last Judgment

I. That this judgment will take place is **an article of faith.** Certain signs will herald the approach of the end of the world, when Christ will judge mankind with full knowledge, justice, impartiality and finality.

II. **The Coming of Christ.** He was humiliated though innocent in the Praetorium and on Calvary. He must be revealed in glory and power. His presence will put to shame all Jews, heretics, schismatics and false teachers. The holiness of His gospel and sacraments will condemn bad Catholics.

III. **Condemnation of sinners.** The Jews, magistrates and Pilate "shall look on Him whom they pierced." Persecutors, heresiarchs and enemies of the Church . . . Each individual sinner . . . With the help of the sacraments he might have been saved, but his rejection of grace, human respect, bad faith and evil life have ruined him. "The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him" (Job xx. 27). How many witnesses will appear against him! angels and

devils, zealous priests and his accomplices in crime. God will say: "Tell me if thou hast anything to justify thyself" (Is. xliii. 26).

IV. **The Sentence** will be given by Christ. It will be either: "Depart, ye cursed," or "Come, ye blessed of my Father." It is irrevocable, and seals our doom for all eternity.

First Sunday of Advent

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

Gospel.—Luke xxi. 25-34.

Threefold coming of Christ: first, when, becoming incarnate, He was born at Christmas; second, when in the Holy Eucharist He is present in our souls; third, when He will judge the living and the dead at the general judgment on the last day.

Three points connected with this third coming: the signs preceding it; the circumstances attending it; the catastrophe following it.

I. **The signs preceding it** are enumerated in to-day's gospel —wonderful changes in the sun, moon, stars, etc. On the earth distress of nations. In His power, God created the world; in His wisdom he made all things work in harmony, but all is corrupted by man's sin. "Men withering away for fear." "The powers of heaven shall be moved."

II. **The circumstances attending it.** "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud." "And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice." When will He come? The confusion will cease, and He will appear surrounded by hosts of angels. How will He come? Clad in divine majesty, leaning on His glorious cross. What a contrast with Calvary! Around Him all the saints, apostles, martyrs and saints of every position in life. They may feel fear, but all are full of faith. Why will He come? Gentle and merciful as He is, He must be our Judge, divine, omniscient, supreme, pitiless. He must render to each according to his works; every conscience will be laid bare. *Nihil tam opertum quod non revelabitur.*

III. **The catastrophe.** At the blast of the angel's trumpet the dead will arise with their bodies. God can restore the constituent parts of each. On the one side, marshalled by the angels, stands the multitude of the elect; on the other the crowd of sinners, herded together by devils who know them well. Jesus appears, the Judge just and glorious. Every conscience is opened and all the good and all the evil is revealed, to the joy of some and the confusion of others. The Sentence —first upon sinners: *Ite,* the very word implies endless separation; *maledicti,* cursed by God's justice; *in ignem,* to the most horrible torture of body and soul, *aeternum* for ever. Then upon the elect: *Venite,* to be with God in His power and glory; *benedicti—Patris mei—possidete regnum.*

The damned are dragged away by devils; their despair knows no end, the gate of the abyss is sealed. Angels raise the song of triumph, as they lead the righteous home—and Jesus reigns supreme—time has passed away, and eternity has begun.

Alternative Plan

Sinners on the Day of Judgment

I. **Sinners called to judgment.** When God speaks the sun is darkened—the moon, stars and powers of heaven. The angel's trumpet sounds, and souls are once more united with their bodies. The angels of heaven, clouds of supernatural beings, guardian angels of the saints, escort our Saviour, who appears in glory, His cross shining with light. The just who served Him, the sinners who scorned Him, alike are called to receive justice, there is no further appeal to His mercy.

II. **Sinners on trial.** Christ sits on a throne of glory, the cross is triumphant, no trace remains of the manger at Bethlehem, the bench in the Praetorium, or the pillar where He was scourged. Sinners are filled with confusion, when their sins, desires, injustice and shame are made manifest. They see their relatives, friends, victims and accomplices. Everything is revealed.

III. **Sinners condemned.** No excuses are possible. They behold others, men like themselves, who have died as Chris-

tians and are now saints. They have nothing to say to the charges brought against them. It is vain for them to plead unbelief or indifference, human respect or the fatal ease of sin; they can only cry: *Vae nobis quia peccavimus.* At last all has been reckoned up, weighed and considered. God arises and pronounces the sentence: *Ite, maledicti* to the reprobate on His left. To the elect on His right He says: *Venite, benedicti.* The awful separation is effected, eternity alone remains.

Second Sunday of Advent

THE WORKS OF CHRIST

Gospel.—Matt. ii. 2-10.

St. John the Baptist sends his disciples to Christ. Two of St. John's disciples came to question our Lord, who referred them to His works. These were enough to prove the divinity of their author. Now some people question the Church; they need only look at what she has accomplished since her foundation.

Three thoughts: Christ's works during His active ministry. Christ's works effected through His Church. The works of the world in opposition to Christ and His Church.

I. **Christ's works during His active ministry.** He was the Messias, the Son of God, foretold in the past, and now become Man to be the Saviour of the world. He alluded to six kinds of works.

(a) The blind see. In the Old Testament we read of but few cures; the people possessed only an imperfect knowledge of religion—but thenceforth all were to see.

(b) The lame walk. How were people to go to God? The Jews often went astray, the natural law was transgressed, and paganism had lost the true God. Christianity was to bring men to the right path.

(c) The dead rise again. Even our first parents were subject to death, but Christ had power to suspend this law. Sin causes the death of the soul, but He can save. Sinners, dead to grace, come to the Sacrament of Penance.

(d) The lepers were cleansed. Our diseases bear but a faint resemblance to the hideous leprosy of sin. Yet Jesus cured it. Our consciences are disfigured by many kinds of spiritual leprosy.

(e) The poor have the Gospel preached to them. In the pagan world the lower classes were mostly slaves, and no instruction was given them. But our Lord and His Church preached to all men, and the civilization of the Gospel was destined to destroy slavery and to establish the brotherhood of mankind.

(f) "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." At first Christ was admired and praised, but afterwards He was scorned and condemned. After cries of *Hosanna* came those of *Crucifigatur*. The proof was enough to satisfy St. John the Baptist.

II. Christ's works through His Church. Our Lord's teaching was for all time, so He founded the Church, which continues His work and lives by His spirit. Listen to her words. No man ever spoke like Jesus, and no form of religion or philosophy has ever given the world any learning so divine as that of Catholicism. Meditate upon the doctrines of the Church. They proceed from God, are superior to all philosophical systems, and answer all questions regarding life, death and eternity. Follow the examples that the Church gives you. You will find in her the most exalted and the most practical virtues. In the case of some of the saints, God conferred on them miraculous powers as a reward for their goodness. Where can we find better instruction? Ask our Lord for His help and grace. The greatest men in the world, when dead, are gone for ever, but Jesus Christ rose again, lives in the Holy Eucharist, inspires His Church, gives us His grace—and for nineteen hundred years His word has prevailed over all persecution, and has civilized the nations. Again, the proof is convincing.

III. **The works of the world in antagonism to Christ and His Church.** The world rejects God's supremacy, which would establish peace and unity among men. It prefers any sort of Barabbas to God. It rejects the Gospel and persecutes

Christ's followers, because the teaching of the Gospel is burdensome, and the lives of Christ's disciples are a reproach to it. It denies the next life altogether, for an acknowledgment of it would involve practicing virtue, overcoming human respect, and acting as good Catholics should act. Consequently the world is unjust towards God and man, and inculcates false doctrines that are always opposed to those of the Gospel and law of Christ.

Peroration. Christ's works prove Him to be the Saviour, those of the world ruin the human race. On which side will you take up your stand?

Alternative Plan

Good and Bad Examples

Our Lord's answer to St. John's disciples ends with the words: "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." He was holiness itself—what are we?

I. **A good example.** It corrects by putting the wicked to silence. The example set by good and virtuous persons deprives them of all opportunity for criticism. "So is the will of God, that by doing well, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter ii. 15). A good example brings back those who are wavering on the way of salvation. It conduces to the glory of God and the Church. Pagans were converted at the sight of the early Christians, and were led to follow their example.

II. **A bad example.** *Dictum vel factum minus rectum, proebens alteri occasionem ruinae* (St. Thomas, 2 a 2 ae qu. 43, a, 1). It is highly contagious in its nature: "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33). It tends to sin: "Corrupt men bring a city to ruin" (Prov. xxix. 8). It is cruel in its effects: "When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. viii. 12). Its consequences are almost irreparable; of the sons of Heli it is written that "the sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord" (1 Kings ii. 17).

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

HUMILITY AND PRIDE

Gospel.—JOHN i. 19-28.

People were taking St. John for the Messias, so the Jews sent messengers to ask him who he was. He referred them to Christ. Do we think of ourselves with pride or humility? Let us see in what relation these qualities stand to (1) justice, (2) public opinion, (3) piety.

I. **Justice.** A humble man does justice to himself; he knows that of himself he is nothing, has nothing, deserves nothing, can do nothing. He sees his shortcomings and sins. A proud man thinks that he possesses property, talents, wit, merits and virtue. His few good qualities are overshadowed by his many bad ones.

II. **Public opinion.** Humility is pleasing but pride is hateful both to God and man. God exalts the humble, gives them His grace, bestows upon them peace of mind and brings them to glory. God abases the proud, humiliates them, brings them into contempt, makes them discontented.

III. **Piety.** A humble man is genuinely good, he distrusts his own opinions, defers to his neighbors, to authority and to God. Although it is the chief of all virtues, it ignores itself. Humility produces saints. Pride, on the other hand, is the source of all sin. It is the cause of our frailty. Sin increases day by day. A proud man becomes the devil's ally. Pride causes men to be condemned.

Peroration. Our vices appear in our bad actions, but we must beware of pride in our good works. St. Augustine warns us to be on our guard: "If thou extollest thyself, God despiseth thee; if thou despisest thyself, God exalteth thee."

Prayer—resolutions.

ALTERNATIVE PLAN

THE MESSAGE SENT TO ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Jews sent men to question St. John. Bad Catholics are always asking questions about religion, but they never accept

any answers. Three things: the synagogue, the Christian, those who question us.

I. **The synagogue.** The prophets had enumerated the characteristics of the Messias; Daniel had foretold the date of His coming; John the Baptist had just recognized Him. Yet the Pharisees and doctors went to St. John and not to Jesus. They asked him: "Who art thou?" St. John exalted our Lord above himself, and then they wanted to hear nothing more. They were inconsistent and hypocritical.

II. **The Christian.** If we are asked: "Who art thou?" what do we reply? Self-love makes us feel satisfaction in our good qualities. If we know our faults and fear to be despised for them, we feel disgust and annoyance. Pride and hypocrisy lead us to dissemble as far as we can. St. John was really humble, and, by speaking of Jesus as far greater than himself, he lowered himself in the esteem of his admirers.

III. **Those who question us.** If we are asked: "Who art thou?" we have to acknowledge that we have forgotten the promises made at our baptism. What about confession? Are we truly penitent and genuinely converted? What about the Easter Duty . . . keeping Sunday . . . Christian way of life . . . the commandments of the Church?

Peroration. Our answer should be an honest confession of guilt.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECIES

Gospel for the day.—Luke iii. 1-6.

We are very near the great festival . . . the prophecies are being fulfilled. The names of the Roman officials are recorded in the gospel to fix the date . . . soon the birth of our Lord will mark the beginning of a new era. There is to be another religion, viz., Christianity.

I. **Another religion.** The Mosaic law promised a new prophet (Deut. xviii. 15); Jeremias speaks of a new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 31); there was to be a new sacrifice and a new priesthood (Is. lxvi.; Daniel ix.; Mal. i.; Amos v.). The Jews

would reject the Messias: "Christ shall be slain, and the people that shall deny Him, shall not be His" (Dan. ix. 26). The true religion was to be taught to all nations (Osee ii. 24; Mal. i. 11; Soph. iii; Ps. ii., etc.).

II. **Christianity.** The Old Testament prepared the way for the New. Four chief prophecies. (1) (Gen. xlix. 10). When Jacob the patriarch blessed his sons, he foretold that Juda should be the ancestor of the Messias, the expectation of nations. (2) (Daniel ix. 24-27). The angel Gabriel stated how many weeks of years should elapse before the coming of the Messias. (3) (Aggeus ii. 8.) The prophet declared that the Desired of all nations would come to His Temple. (4) Malachias iii. 1 spoke of our Lord's precursor, St. John the Baptist, and of the Messias as coming to His Temple. (In the year 70 A.D. the Temple was burnt and destroyed.) Historically Christianity alone satisfies all the requirements of the prophecies, and for nineteen hundred years it has stood firm against all persecutions, even those of the followers of Judaism. Founded by Christ Himself, to whom the Messianic prophecies refer, it has civilized and converted barbarians, trained new nations and tinged all legislation with its spirit. Even its enemies acknowledge this, and the greatest men have been its adherents.

Peroration. Let us celebrate Christmas, the feast of our Redeemer's coming, and put the service of God above all else in this life, that we may enjoy peace of mind here and heaven hereafter.

Alternative Plan

Preparation for Christmas

Why do the evangelists record the names of all these officials? They were Romans, foreigners, pagans, whom the Jews were forced to obey. It was because God wished to fix the date of the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies. There was to be no uncertainty about it.

How ought we to celebrate this great anniversary? Listen to the words of St. John the Baptist: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord—Make straight His paths—Every valley shall be filled—Every mountain and hill shall be brought low—The

crooked shall be made straight—and the rough ways plain." The application is easy. When this is done "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Who would not wish to sanctify his soul in anticipation of such a day?

In consideration of the sublime mystery the Church's observance of Christmas has four special features: (1) It is a festival of the highest rank, (2) it is preceded by a lengthy fast, (3) Mass is said at midnight, to commemorate the shepherds and angels, (4) each priest may say three Masses, in remembrance of our Saviour's threefold coming.

Peroration. Come, divine Messias . . . glory of God, peace of our souls, pledge of our salvation.

The Last Sunday of the Year

TIME AND ETERNITY

"This child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel."—Luke ii. 34.

Our thoughts may well dwell upon these words at the end of the year. Let us cast a glance backwards and forwards.

I. **Time is fleeting.** "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, save to love God and serve Him alone." How true these words are in time. Now we experience good and bad fortune, which we often imagine or exaggerate. Sometimes good and bad, bitterness and consolation are intermingled, but always they are limited and of brief duration, for life itself comes to an end. But in eternity all is reality; heaven and hell never change—there is no admixture of sorrow in the joy and glory of heaven; all is infinite, of unlimited duration.

II. **Time is important.** Some one has said: "Time is the material of which life is composed." Time is precious in its source, its course and its end. It is the opportunity for us to add to our virtues and merit and to work out our salvation. When it is gone, we cannot call it back in order to carry out our plans, or for any other purpose.

III. **The things of time are liable to change.** God says in the Apocalypse *Ecce nova facio omnia.* The change will be un-

expected, terrible to the careless, who will appear before God with empty hands, but beneficial to the upright who will reap their reward for having done their duty in spite of privations and difficulties.

Peroration. The thought of eternity is a very serious one; let us make acts of sorrow for the past and good resolutions for the future.

Alternative Plan

The Thought of Eternity

Each year has its end, but those who see the beginning do not all live to witness the close. Eternity is drawing near to every one of us. The remembrance of this fact should detach us from affection to this world, and make us regard it as a fleeting shadow, as the flight of a bird in the air. What is a lifetime in comparison with eternity? Nothing here is permanent, all is passing away. The only dwelling where we shall stay long is the grave. Here we are always in danger of forfeiting life eternal; we serve God so little and fall so often into sin. The thought of eternity should comfort us in all our sufferings, which are but slight in comparison with those of purgatory and hell—short in comparison with the unending happiness of heaven, and very beneficial, because they give us an opportunity of gaining merit. The thought of eternity ought to make us better Christians, for it will awaken our sorrow for past sins, arouse our fervor and encourage us to persevere.

Peroration. St. Louis of Gonzaga used to ask himself before doing any action: *Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?* He did everything with true piety. Let us pray for the dead, especially for those who have died this year, and let us resolve firmly henceforth to live a truly Christian life, that we may attain to salvation. Amen.

PART II

FEASTS OF OUR LORD, OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND OF THE SAINTS

I. FEASTS OF OUR LORD

THE CIRCUMCISION

A week after His birth our Lord began to shed His blood, and to accomplish His mission as our Redeemer. Three points: He received the name of Saviour; He began the work of saving mankind; He awaits our coöperation.

I. **He received the name.** The angel said to St. Joseph: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). He was announced by angels, shepherds and wise men; no sooner was He born, than He brought joy to mankind. He is our Saviour in truth as well as in name. He awaited only the day fixed by the law; "when eight days were fulfilled." His tears in the manger had an infinite merit, because of the two natures united in His person. His title of Saviour was bought with the price of pain, sorrow and finally death on Calvary; hence He is our Mediator, Victim and Ransom (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Peter i. 18). As a Saviour He is mighty, for He delivers us from sin, which is slavery to the devil. He restores to us supernatural life, and before Him every knee shall bow (John x. 10; Acts iv. 12; Phil. ii. 10).

II. **He began the work.** He saves us at a cost to Himself (Heb. vi. 20). He sacrificed His glory, and became in *similitudinem carnis peccati* (Rom. viii. 2) and a victim of sin (2 Cor. v. 21). He shed His blood, for without blood there is no remis-

sion of sin (Heb. ix. 22). The Mosaic sacrifices were not enough (Heb. x. 6). The Blood of Christ alone can cleanse (1 John i. 7), and the expiation was completed on the cross (Col. i. 20). He offered His life, for circumcision was a prelude to death (Gal. v. 3). It was for this that He came (Matt. v. 17) and He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 8).

III. **He expects our cooperation.** He asks of us fidelity; we must bear in our bodies the mortification of Christ (2 Cor. iv. 10). He submitted to the Jewish rite of circumcision, although He was above the law. He asks for our gratitude. "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv. 12). Let us do our part; *Qui creavit te sine te, non salvabit te sine te* (St. Augustine). Unless we do so, we make all that He has done worthless.

He asks for our zeal. Unless we are zealous, we make Him our Judge instead of our Saviour. His essential glory cannot be affected by our actions, but we can increase His glory among men. Each man is his own nearest neighbor.

Peroration. There are three things for us to do: to be grateful for His goodness, to apply to ourselves His merits and to persevere in His service.

Alternative Plan

A Threefold Circumcision

There are three kinds of Christians in the world: (a) the good, who as a rule wish to avoid sin; (b) the fervent, who wish to rid themselves of all superfluity; (c) the mortified, who often give up what is necessary. Thus there is a threefold circumcision —of soul, heart and body.

I. **Of the soul.** Origen spoke of the death of hands, eyes, taste and feet, so as to be devoted solely to the things of God (Hom. 3 in Gen.). St. Bonaventure calls contrition a stone, *acuta*, confession a knife, *acutior*, satisfaction a sword, *acutissima*. In the Apocalypse we read of a sharp two-edged sword coming forth from the mouth of God (i. 16), and St. Bonaventure gives this explanation of it: *Si poenitentia acuta non te circumcideris, sententia acuta circumcideris a Deo.*

II. **Of the heart.** The sword of meditation cuts away affection for sin. Circumcision of the heart gives spiritual life. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart . . . that thou mayst live" (Deut. xxx. 6). The name of Jesus must be impressed upon our hearts. His poverty will turn us from love of riches; He was overwhelmed with reproaches, and will teach us to assign their true value to the honors of this world; He was scourged and crucified, and will help us to resist the allurements of sinful pleasures.

III. **Of the body.** The sword of mortification restrains the passions. The human body fell under the original curse. Thomas à Kempis tells us that the more the flesh is conquered, the more easily will the spirit rise aloft (*De discipl. claustrali*).

Peroration. O my Saviour; Thy divine blood is ready to sanctify and sustain me during the coming year. "And the blood shall be unto you for a sign" (Ex. xii. 13).

THE EPIPHANY

"We have seen His star in the east and are come to adore Him.— MATT. ii. 2.

Angels made known the birth of Christ to the shepherds, and a star guided the Wise Men to Him. They were *wise,* inasmuch as they recognized Him, *preachers,* for they proclaimed Him in Jerusalem, and *religious rulers,* who adored Him at Bethlehem.

I. **Wise men.** They asserted that they had seen the star, and so they came from the east. An unwonted astronomical phenomenon led them to what was divine, and inward light illumined them. The star was unusual in four respects: its situation, brilliancy, movement and object. It was the star of the divine Child. Heaven and earth and all that in them is belong to God; He made the stars at the Creation, but this was the star of the Incarnation. Others must have seen it, but did not understand its significance. Let us never neglect the inspiration of grace.

II. **Preachers.** Of old the Hebrews were guided through the desert by a cloud; now the wise men were led by a star, which disappeared when they reached Jerusalem. Full of

anxiety, they entered the city, and spoke of the star, and inquired where the King of the Jews was to be found. Herod was troubled and assembled the learned men, who said that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, but none of them went thither to seek the Messias, whom their ancestors had all expected. The magi assumed that Jesus would be known and adored, but the people to whom they spoke were indifferent, so they alone went on in obedience to God. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13).

III. **Religious princes.** The shepherds had glorified the divine Child, but the magi, knowing the worship due to God, adored Him. They found an Infant, His parents and some cattle in a miserable outhouse, but they had seen the star and were not dismayed. They found no sceptre, diadem or retinue of servants, but nevertheless He was their divine Lord. They offered Him their gifts, all were for Jesus, none for Herod. According to oriental custom no one could appear in a king's presence empty handed; they recognized Jesus as the true King. They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Let us offer to God the gold of our love, the frankincense of our zeal and devotion, the myrrh of our contrition and repentance. Regardless of Herod's request, they did not go back to inform him, but went home by another road that an angel of God pointed out to them. When we have learnt to know God, we must not return to wicked companions.

Peroration. Let us imitate the Magi; in answer to the call of divine grace let us lead virtuous lives, setting an example to our neighbors, and offering our piety to God. For us the star represents the Gospel and the Church, and Bethlehem stands for heaven.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Vocatum est nomen ejus Jesus.—Luke i. 21.

An angel from God had ordered this name to be given to the holy Child, and He received it at His circumcision. St.

Paul says: "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth (Phil. ii. 10). Let us consider the meaning and the results of this holy name.

I. **Meaning.** Jesus means Saviour; the name is glorious. God possesses an essential and eternal glory peculiar to Himself, and also an accidental glory, derived from His creatures. On Thabor both kinds of glory were manifested in Jesus Christ, but on Calvary the first only was revealed by marvelous events, the second was proclaimed by a few persons, who said: "*Vere Filius Dei erat iste.* As our Saviour, He renders the souls of men just and holy, and perfects human virtue and rewards it with heaven. Jesus being the name of God, is a name above all names (Phil. ii. 9). As the name of the God-Man, it expresses all that is greatest, best and most perfect in humanity. As the name of our Saviour, the Incarnation bestows upon it the perfections of the Divine Word, so that it is able to satisfy the justice of God.

II. **The results of invoking this name.** It is a name fraught with grace and salvation. St. Paul says: "No man can say 'the Lord Jesus' but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3). It is to us a consolation in our sorrows, strength in our temptations, a refuge in time of danger. Our Lord tells us to ask and we shall receive—this name is prayer—to seek and we shall find —this name is the torch that guides me—to knock and it shall be opened to us—this name is the key to the gate of heaven. It is our salvation; in it we find alleviation amidst our sufferings, light in darkness, support against the assaults of Satan; a reminder of God's mercies; a pledge of final grace. "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). O Lord Jesus, draw our souls to Thyself.

Alternative Plan

The Holy Name

Majesty of this name. It was announced by an angel from heaven: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; he shall be great" (Luke

i. 31, 32). Consider the history of the name in antiquity and Christianity.

I. **In antiquity.** The name was borne by others besides our Lord—Josue or Jesus was the successor of Moses. (b) Jesus, son of Sirach (Ecclus. l. 29). (c) Jesus, son of Josedec (Ag. i. 12). These were types of the Messias, who united in Himself their qualities. The very name expressed triumph and glory. It was usual for great men to bear a name derived from their achievements . . . Scipio Africanus, Cato the Censor, Musius Scaevola, Charlemagne, etc. . . ., yet their victories brought sorrow to many, whereas Jesus civilized, taught and healed mankind and overcame Satan.

II. **In Christianity.** In our liturgy all our prayers are offered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). Let us reverence the holy Name—never utter it lightly, and let us invoke it with confidence.

Peroration. I am a Christian.

Three qualities. In the second Nocturn of this feast, St. Bernard speaks of our Lord as our food, our light and our remedy.

I. **Our Food.** Our souls need food. In answer to the request: "Lord, teach us to pray," Christ taught the disciples to ask for daily, supersubstantial bread. He is the Bread of our souls in prayer and in the Eucharist. He bids us eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and the Church requires us to go to Holy Communion at least once a year.

II. **Our Light.** "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John i. 4). "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John xiv. 6). The way of paganism and worldly wisdom is in darkness. The theories and delusions of the world are false. The moral life of man finds its perfection only in the law of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). Human reason is an untrustworthy guide; its history is that of men's mistakes. But David says: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum, et lumen semitis meis* (Ps. 118).

III. **Our Remedy.** Why was our Lord called Jesus? Because He was to save His people from their sins (Matt. i. 21). With His help, men rise up and walk (Acts iii. 6); the worst sins are forgiven. All the prayers of the Church end with "through Jesus Christ our Lord." O Jesus, be to us food, light and healing. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Our Duties

As Christians, we are called after Christ. We have therefor certain duties, especially are we bound to treat Him with respect, gratitude and confidence.

I. **Respect.** "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. ii. 10). Our Lord promised that in His name the apostles should cast out devils, speak with tongues and escape injury from poison (Mark xvi. 18). We should respect the name "Christian"—our own family name.

II. **Gratitude.** This is a virtue ignored by the world, where selfishness reigns supreme—nevertheless parents, benefactors, friends . . . have a claim upon our gratitude. Yet Christ is far more generous, and our good qualities are good only because they resemble His. Think of what He has done for us, the manger and the cross, and let us love Him better.

III. **Confidence.** What has He failed to do for us? He came down from heaven and became incarnate for us, that He might seek the lost sheep, and bring them back to God. In His name let us pray with confidence, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). "Come unto me" (Matt. xi. 28). Yes, we will come to Thee, dear Saviour. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Six Prerogatives

A simple meditation on our behavior towards our Lord.

I. **His name is glorious.** It deserves all reverence. Have you shown it respect and homage?

II. **It is full of grace.** Do you do your work with true piety and unction? Or are you dry and indifferent in your Christian life?

III. **It is a mighty name.** We all have passions and temptations to overcome. Once, St. Teresa, being ill, saw the devil, and put him to flight by making the Sign of the Cross. He came back, but she did the same thing, and he went away and left her.

IV. **It is a name full of consolation.** In this life pain and sorrow abound and joys are rare. We exert ourselves to escape the former and secure the latter. A true Christian finds comfort in God, is resigned, prays, and remembers our Saviour in the Praetorium and on Calvary. "He comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Cor. i. 4).

V. **It is a name reminding us of God's mercy.** Our Lord suffered as He did, from the manger to the cross, solely in order to redeem and save us. His blood cleanses our souls. "This is my blood . . . which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). Let us therefore come to Him; He calls us and will welcome us. He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor."

VI. **It is a name able to save us.** He came to save us, and really desires our salvation. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). We have every reason for going to Him—let us cast aside all excuses, human respect, and thoughts of deferring our conversion.

Peroration. Let us return God love for love.

Alternative Plan

Jesus

I. **The power of the Holy Name.** It is mighty in heaven, where He acts as mediator between God and man, showing His Father the scars of His wounds. It is mighty on earth. He calls us to the Holy Eucharist, sanctifies us in Holy Communion, remains in the tabernacle listening to us, immolates Himself on our altars and forgives us in the Sacrament of Penance. It is mighty in hell. He condemns the wicked, re-

strains devils and is adored by all in spite of themselves. "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth." Let us love Him, and at Holy Communion beg Him to be our Mediator.

II. **Our model.** A model perceptible to our senses—*apparuit*—at the Incarnation. An infallible model, bestowing grace upon us: *Gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri.* A universal model, for all men to copy. An indispensable model, revealing heaven to us. "For the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 11-13). Gerson says that the holy name is a remedy against sin, refreshment in time of temptation, protection in our struggles, and comfort in tribulation.

Good Friday

GETHSEMANI AND CALVARY

"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."—Is. liii. 6.

The iniquity of us *all* was laid on Him *alone.* Let us try to understand this mystery and the meaning of these prophetic words. Of us *all*—from the fall of our first parents to the last sin committed by the last man on earth—the sins of the entire human race were laid on Him, the Man of Sorrows, from His birth at Bethlehem to His death on Calvary. How trivial seem the fleeting interests of this life, when we remember at what cost, by whose suffering and under what standard the great conflict was fought out, which was to decide whether the human race should be in everlasting bondage to Satan in hell, or enjoy eternal happiness in the participation of God's glory!

May the contemplation of the holy cross, where my Saviour hangs crucified, inspire me with words worthy of my priesthood, and worthy, too, of my divine Master. . . . O sacred tree, I adore thee with profound emotion; to thee does the whole world turn for civilization and liberty in the sight

of God, and thou revealest to us the true Lawgiver, hanging between heaven and earth.

I. **The Garden of Olives.** Our Lord had just instituted the Holy Eucharist, and *hymno dicto* went forth with the eleven to the Garden of Olives. On the way, He foretold His Passion. They crossed the Cedron and entered the garden. Leaving eight of the apostles behind, He went forward with the three who had been present on Mount Thabor, until He bade them also "watch and pray," and went on alone towards a grotto some six feet in depth. There He prayed, and beheld in a vision all the sins of men from Adam to the end of the world. "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from me, but yet not my will, but Thine be done." Then, with renewed strength, He went back to the three, and found them asleep.

Again He entered the grotto to pray, and in a second vision beheld the effects of sin in the individual soul, in families and in society. He saw wicked and impious men and heretics, and Satan desiring to carry them off. Again He prayed: "Father, let this chalice pass from me," and going back to the apostles a second time, found them asleep. For a third time He turned to the grotto, and, as He prayed, He saw a third vision—heaven opened to the elect, and the suffering and cross which constitute their sanctity. Then followed the sweat of blood, and God sent down Gabriel, the angel of the incarnation, to comfort Him, so that He arose and, going once more to the apostles, said: "Behold the hour is at hand and the Son of Man shall be betrayed . . ."

Judas, the infamous traitor, approached, accompanied by twenty soldiers, to whom he had said: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He." Jesus spoke to him and to the crowd, who fell down. Note the power of God's word. Judas and the Pharisees in their scorn and impenitence remained upright. Twice did He ask: "Whom seek ye?"

In vain did the faithful disciples throw themselves upon the traitor. Peter with his sword cut off the ear of Malchus, whom Jesus healed. At length their Master allowed Himself to be taken, and the apostles fled.

My brethren, do you recognize yourselves in the visions of

the agony, in the attack of Christ's enemies, in the flight of the apostles? Let us pray: *O Crux, ave.*

II. **The Tribunals.** The crowd of Pharisees and soldiers that arrested Jesus displayed no warrant against Him, so that their action was illegal. Where there was legality, there was no loyalty. Our Lord was dragged along, with His hands bound below the elbow. Torches were lighted at the lantern carried by Judas. John threw aside his cloak, and followed at a short distance. As they crossed the Cedron Jesus fell, and along the road people insulted Him, jeering because His angel had not removed the stones. He was taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, in whose house the Council had assembled. Amongst those present were the sinners whom He had rebuked, the traders whom He had driven from the Temple, the disappointed heirs of those whom He had cured. The good were too much afraid to be there—Policy of "leave things alone." In the town the lambs were bleating that were to be sacrificed at the Pasch.

Annas began to ask our Lord about His doctrine—still there was no charge brought against Him; He replied that He had always taught openly in the synagogue, whereupon a servant struck Him with a steel gauntlet. Jesus said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil . . ." Then some kind of accusation was made, and Annas sent Him to Caiphas, the high priest for that year, who, without hearing or reading any evidence, had already made up his mind to condemn our Lord. "Jesus held His peace," and the false witnesses put no restraint upon themselves. Caiphas at last asked a question: "Tell us if Thou be the Christ." "Thou hast said it." Cries of: "He is guilty of death." The cowardly went away, the wicked remained to insult, spit at and buffet Him. John came in, being well known as a seller of fish; Peter, his companion, dared not venture beyond the courtyard, where he warmed himself and listened—it was there that his denial occurred.

In the morning Caiphas repeated the question: "Art Thou the Son of God?" Jesus answered: "You say that I am." At that moment Judas brought back the money. Pilate, the

Roman governor, procurator of the province, asked what accusation the Jews brought against Jesus, and afterwards said to our Lord: "What hast Thou done?" "I came into the world that I should give testimony to the truth." Pilate declared Him innocent; fresh charges were made, as Pilate still would not yield, but sent Him to Herod.

Herod was anxious to witness miracles, but Jesus was silent, and the king handed Him over to the soldiers, who ill-treated Him. Meanwhile the Pharisees were distributing money to the leaders of the people.

For the second time our Saviour was brought before Pilate, who declared that neither he nor Herod could find any reason for putting Him to death, so he would chastise and release Him. (Why chastise one who was innocent?) The people clamored for the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Scourging.—Six men, standing two and two, armed with whips, rods and knotted ropes. Then they put our Lord on a bench, with a crown of thorns and a scarlet mantle, and bowed in mockery before Him.

Pilate brought Him forth to the people: *Ecce homo*—"Let Him be crucified; away with Him." Pilate yielded and pronounced sentence, washing his hands to show that he was innocent of His death.

The vision of Pilate's wife. Pilate sacrificed his personal convictions to his political advantage.

How much there is here for us to meditate upon!

III. **Calvary.** The condemnation was secured, and the Pharisees had the cross in readiness. Pilate wrote the inscription J. N. R. J.

The *Via dolorosa.* Our Lady, St. Veronica (Vera Icon). The holy women. Our Saviour's frequent falls. Simon the Cyrenean. (The Way of the Cross.)

Calvary—a place of the dead. Spurred on by devils, the executioners seized Jesus, around whom the angels were weeping. Close at hand stood our Lady, St. John and the holy women. Our Lord was stripped, but a young man, St. Joseph's nephew, gave Him a loin cloth. He was stretched

upon the cross, nails were driven through His hands and feet, then the cross was raised and allowed to fall into the hole prepared for it. It stands in the center of the world, like a new tree of life. Our Lord's arms extended He beckoned the East and the West to come to Him. History proves the truth of these words. On either side were the thieves, bound, not nailed to their crosses.

The prayer of the good thief, and our Lord's reply.

Near the cross the executioners were dividing the garments and casting lots for the tunic; they were eager to secure their unjust gains.

Our Lord spoke to His mother and St. John, and prayed to His father in heaven—the wicked blasphemed, saying: "Come down from the cross." At noon the sun disappeared and darkness prevailed. Towards 3 P.M. Jesus cried: *Eli Eli, lamma sabacthani; Sitio; Consummatum est;* then with a loud cry He died.

The veil of the Temple was rent, the earth shook, the rocks were cleft, the tombs opened and many dead arose in a sad and wonderful procession that lasted an hour, with Adam at its head. He beheld the Redeemer and gave thanks to God.

Peroration. Some of the bystanders, striking their breasts, bore testimony to our Lord's divinity, but others continued to blaspheme. It has ever been thus, and it will always be so. To which class will you belong?

The prophecies were accomplished; no other Messias has appeared in the 2000 years that have since elapsed. O God, fill our hearts with deep devotion to Thee in Thy agony and passion; look with pity upon us assembled here. Amen.

Another Arrangement of the same Subject

1. The apostles, the populace, the established authority.

2. Jesus doing penance, guilty humanity, God's anger appeased.

3. The agony in the garden; the humiliation in the Praetorium; the death on the cross.

N. B.—These divisions, with the exception of the last, do not

allow the Gospel narrative to be followed so closely, and render the arrangement of the discourse more difficult. Nevertheless we suggest them as likely to be useful hints.

Easter Sunday

THE RESURRECTION

Not many hours ago the Church called us to meditate upon the mournful scene on Calvary, now, since daybreak on the third day, the glory of the Resurrection has shone forth upon the world. In forty days we shall celebrate our Lord's glorious Ascension into heaven.

After persecution comes triumph; after the darkness of death the brightness of eternal life; after man God. God's hand is everywhere, always. Come and see; our Saviour's works are permanent; unchanging as His decrees they continue throughout all generations. This is indeed the day that the Lord hath made . . .

Pilate and the Pharisees have mouldered to dust, but others like them arise to insult Christ in every age. They cannot indeed assail Him personally, since, as St. Paul says, Christ being risen from the dead dieth no more, but they cavil at His words, criticize His disciples, and attack your souls, but, if you are resolute, those souls and the Church which is His work will always triumph. Three thoughts present themselves to us. First, the reality of the Resurrection must be established, like other historical facts, by means of evidence. Second, the instruction that we may derive from it for the spiritual resurrection of our souls. Third, the power displayed in every age by our Saviour's work, which, being present in His Church, is always attacked but invariably triumphs. May my words avail to give you an intelligent certainty as to to-day's great mystery and its consequences, and may they inspire you with increased love of Christ and His Church, and true zeal for the welfare of your souls.

I. **The Resurrection, an historical fact.**—It is vouched for by unexceptionable witnesses, the authority of those who have

believed it from the beginning, and the absurdity of the theories which those that deny it have put forward.

1. *Unexceptionable witnesses.* The apostles lived on intimate terms with our Lord for three years, and knew Him well; they had supped with Him on the Thursday, had seen Him die on the Friday and had hidden for fear of the Jews. How could they possibly make a mistake on the Sunday? We recognize a friend or relative when he returns from a journey. . . . They had misgivings. . . . St. Thomas. . . . The disciples at Emmaus. In the Gospel we read of ten occasions when our Lord appeared. Once He was seen by five hundred disciples. How could they have invented the story? They had nothing to gain by it; they were safely in hiding and felt no further alarm; why should they be impostors? They underwent great trials, persecutions, tortures and death; were accursed by God and man; "I believe witnesses who allow themselves to be put to death for their testimony." God worked miracles on their behalf.

2. *The authority of their converts.* Only fifty days after the Crucifixion St. Peter made 3000 converts by his first sermon, and afterwards 5000 more. He was imprisoned for his bold words to the high priest, but was delivered by an angel. St. Paul, after his conversion, preached to all nations. Ten furious persecutions caused thousands of Christians to die as martyrs; but nevertheless Christ rose again.

3. *Absurdity of the theories opposed to the Resurrection.* The apostles might have carried away the body. . . . If so, what about the guards? They might have paid them well . . . But Judas had stolen their money. Perhaps they dug a subterranean passage—none has ever been discovered in the rock. Why should they in that case have rolled away the stone, folded the linen cloths, and left two of their number there clad in white raiment? Would they have done all this just in order to lead afterwards a laborious life, subject to persecution? Would God have worked miracles to help them? The guards were picked men, brave and well armed. They cannot have been asleep when on duty, for their commanders did not punish them. No investigation was held, but later on they were simply forbidden to talk about the

Resurrection. The apostles were told not to preach in the name of Jesus, and St. Peter replied: *Non possumus non loqui*—the fact was notorious.

II. **The Resurrection, a type of the soul's revival.** The dead, whom Christ raised, died a second time. The daughter of Jairus, the young man at Naim, Lazarus of Bethany. So have those died who were recalled to life by the saints, but Christ dieth no more. Preserve in your souls the grace of absolution and Communion. The apostles were weak and timid men, but after the coming of the Holy Spirit they were strong and fearless. The grounds for our conversion never change; the Church is always the same.

III. **The Resurrection is the lifegiving power in the Church.** —The Church was founded by Christ; she is His work, and He abides in her amongst men. She has two classes of enemies, those who attack her (a) by brute force, (b) by the intellect. Brute force, persecutions, wild beasts, boiling pitch, the rack, fire and death. At a later date, Christians were not put to death, but imprisoned, plundered, reduced to beggary or driven into exile. Petty tyrants persecute Catholics, abuse zealous priests, turn them out of their parishes. Violence and slander do their work; men pass away and die, but the Church remains.

The intellect of man is used against the Church. False doctrines . . . rebellion against authority, heresies, schisms, irregular appointments of pontiffs, intrigues. Rebellion against true doctrines; lies invented by wicked men, dishonest arguments, bad books, false teachers. . . . Rebellion against our Lord's mission; indifferent Catholics, culpable human respect; ministers devoid of zeal, pontiffs servile to the secular power. . . .

Thus the spirit of evil continues the work of Pilate and the Pharisees, but God, the souls of men and the Church remain unconquered and immortal.

Peroration. Christ, having risen from the tomb, will never return thither; He lives in the glory of heaven, and through the Eucharist continues to sanctify our souls. The Church is His representative among men; on the ocean of time she is the bark

of Peter, the cross of Calvary is her mast, the virtues of the saints are her sails, the grace of the Holy Spirit guides her; the supreme Pontiff is her pilot, our souls are the passengers. Fear nothing from the world. In vain may tempests, aroused by politicians, threaten her with destruction; the storms pass over and die away. He alone is in danger who plunges out of the bark into the sea. She will never founder, but will reach the harbor of immortality in safety. O Divine Saviour and Master, by Thy holy Resurrection give strength to our souls, protect Thy Church, and bring us to heaven. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Threefold Character of the Resurrection

Its truth, permanence and publicity.

I. **Its truth.** Men ask: "How did Christ rise again?" and St. Luke gives the answer: *Surrexit vere* (Luke xxiv. 34). Our Lord had frequently spoken of His Passion and Resurrection; as His whole life proved Him to be the Messias, there could be no doubt as to its end. God never encourages falsehood or makes Himself an accomplice in deceit. Consider the Gospel narrative. The evidence was so convincing that the apostles were ready to preach Christ and to die for Him. What about ourselves? Our fulfilment of the Easter precept has been our spiritual resurrection; it ought not to be a mere shadow. Outward profession of piety, merely external observances, careless confessions, lukewarm Communions—these are shadows and illusions, bearing no resemblance to the true Resurrection of Christ. Put something supernatural, some principle of divine faith into the practice of your religion. Christ being risen . . . dieth no more.

II. **Its permanence.** What did our Lord accomplish at His resurrection? He rid Himself from all the bonds of death, and resumed all the characteristics of immortality. What about the others who rose from the dead? Lazarus "came forth bound." And what of us? We have, I trust, cast off the bonds that were burdensome, harmful and dangerous; but have we perhaps retained those that flattered and attracted

us, under the cloak of innocence? Our Lord left the cloths and winding sheet in the tomb, and came forth glorious. Like Him we ought to preserve the unchanging characteristics of the spiritual life, *agility* in doing our duty; *subtlety* in overcoming obstacles, *clarity* in loving virtue, *impassibility* in resisting vice, and *renewal* in Christian spirit.

III. **Its publicity.** The resurrection was public and splendid, to remove the scandal of the cross. The seals on the tomb were broken, the stone was rolled away, an angel sat upon the rock, the guards were half-dead with fear, the Pharisees, convinced that Christ had risen, offered bribes to the soldiers. There was certainty on the part of the holy women, Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, the disciples at Emmaus, the apostles in the cenacle, Thomas, who had not believed at first—ten distinct occasions when our Lord appeared, and the authorities issued no official denial of the apostles' public statement. What about ourselves? Is our conversion permanent? It ought to be so, and its splendor ought to put Satan to rout, strengthen the weak, comfort the good, and edify all men. God and our own self-interest require this.

Peroration. Our Saviour said: "Let your light shine before men" (Matt. v. 16). O my God, it is my desire to remain for ever faithful to Thee. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Truth and the Life

I. Truth. Three proofs of the Resurrection: it was foretold by our Lord; the disciples believed its reality, and even His enemies were convinced that it had occurred.

1. *It was foretold by our Lord.* He proved His power by raising three persons from the dead, and transmitted it to His apostles, who were ordered to exercise it in His name, and He still displays it to the world in the miracles worked by many of the saints. He frequently spoke of His own resurrection, and in spite of the vigilance of His enemies, the guards and the seals on the sepulchre, He rose from the dead on the third day.

2. *His disciples believed it.* The apostles and direct disciples had for the most part followed Christ for three years, knew Him well and saw His miracles; now they beheld Him again in the cenacle and in various places in Judea and Galilee. These men felt absolute certainly, they spoke of the Resurrection as a fact when preaching and were ready to die rather than deny it. Others who believed it had not been our Lord's immediate followers, but derived their information from the former class. They numbered at first 3000, then 5000, and soon became a countless multitude. They were to be found everywhere, and they too died as martyrs for their faith. "I believe, I am a Christian?" They were familiar with the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and we hold the same belief after nearly 2000 years.

3. *Our Lord's enemies were convinced of it.* The Resurrection is an event recorded in history. The priests and Pharisees had insisted that Christ must be put to death, but they did not deny that He rose again, they only tried to suppress the fact. They declared that the guards were to blame, but refrained from punishing them, as they could not have prevented the sepulchre from allowing Jesus to come forth. On the contrary, they gave the men money and ordered them to say that the disciples had carried off the body, whilst they slept. If they had been asleep, they could not have kept watch, and therefore they would have seen nothing. No, the soldiers on guard are witnesses to the truth of the Resurrection. Our Alleluia is a cry of triumph.

II. **The new life.** Our Lord's body was alive, but glorified; it was honored on earth and in heaven. The new life of the heart, in the Church and the saints.

1. *The life of the body.* Good Friday was the day when deicides triumphed; Easter Sunday was God's day. The scourges, thorns, nails, lance and death itself remained only as memories. The priests and Pharisees thought themselves rid of our Lord, but He rose from the dead, transfigured and beyond the reach of further suffering.

2. *He rose in honor.* His death on the cross was shameful, and the people had believed His enemies and their lies. But think of what happened at Pentecost, when Jews from seventeen different countries were present. A few years later whole nations

were converted, and in place of the cry *Crucifigatur* resound the words: *Resurrexit sicut dixit* from age to age.

3. *He lives in the hearts of men.* Christ had worked many miracles and met with much ingratitude; even the apostles forsook Him and fled—but after the Resurrection they were filled with indomitable zeal, and His followers in thousands and millions sprang up in every region of the world. Study history, look at the Church, listen to the voice of good Catholics; all share one faith, one love, one *alleluia* of triumph.

Peroration. To sum up. Our Lord foretold, history affirms, His enemies could not deny the Resurrection. He came forth from the tomb with a glorified body, all insults gave place to honor, all cowardice disappears before zeal and love. O Jesus, take possession of our hearts here and in heaven. Amen.

Various Outlines

I. The Resurrection.

(a) Grace, (b) model, (c) reward.

1. **Grace.** Christ offers us the grace of a new life for our justification (Rom. iv. 25). The grace of conviction. Consider the wickedness of the Jews, the hesitation of the apostles, the impiety of godless men. The grace of attraction. Whenever our Saviour appeared, He showed special favor to those who were most guilty, St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalene; His words were full of tenderness; He was lavish of His gifts and His heart was open to all. Grace of reformation. Previously the devil had triumphed, the Pharisees rejoiced, the people cursed, the disciples feared. All this was changed by the Resurrection.

2. **Model.** "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). The Resurrection was real and true—what about our Easter resolutions? It was permanent. How shall we stand in a few weeks? It was plain and open. Are we going to be really faithful?

3. **Reward.** "He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory, according to the operation

whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21). Christ can do this. He has promised to do it, therefore He must do it.

Peroration. Let us strip off the past and cast it aside, and put on the new life of grace.

II. The Resurrection.

The hope and beginning of our own.

1. Christ's Resurrection justifies our hope. That He rose again is an incontrovertible fact, which proves that it is possible for the dead to rise again. During His life Jesus raised the dead. He can still do so. Nothing can be successfully urged against the dogma of the Resurrection. 2. Christ's Resurrection is the beginning of our own. This is to the good a mystery full of consolation, since those who have shared His sufferings and followed His example will share also in His glory. To the wicked it is a mystery full of horror, since those who have rejected His teaching and disobeyed His commands will be cast out from it. Compare the two states, one of glory, the other of confusion. "Therefore if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above" (Col. iii. 1).

III. The Holy Women at the Sepulchre.

An example how to seek Jesus. They hastened without delay. When we have lost God through sin, we must make haste to find Him again. They spoke to the angel, who told them what they were to do. We should turn to Holy Church and her sacraments, that she may bring us back to God. They did not cease weeping during their search. A soul separated from God is in a state of sorrow. *Features of a true resurrection.* Those whom Christ raised from the dead died again, but He alone dieth no more. Hence we find that His Resurrection is true, certain and self-evident, permanent, public and prompt.

IV. The Life Restored.

Our Lord died, but will die no more. Ye who have died to sin, beware of falling back into it. Our Lord rose to lead a new life. Ye who have recovered the state of grace, make up your minds to live as true Christians. Our spiritual resurrection resembles the actual Resurrection of Christ, and ought to

be like it in its truth, transforming power, triumph and permanence. Our Lord's Resurrection is the foundation of our religion and the basis of our faith, life and hope of immortality. St. Paul says: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). In that case there would be no truth in the Messias, the apostles, the Church or the saints. But God does not contradict Himself. We must be "steadfast and unmovable" (1 Cor. xv. 58). God's truth can never pass away; let us therefore stand firm in our faith and good works.

V. The Sepulchre and Grace.

Our Lord came forth from the Tomb on the third day, as He had foretold. Let us be prompt to abandon sin, and careful not to fall back into it. He came forth by His own personal omnipotence. Let us overcome the obstacles that bind us to our sins. He came forth once for all. Let us return to a good life promptly, once for all, and at all costs. Then, when grace has been restored to us, we shall be fervent; when our Lord rose again His body was glorified. Our life will be edifying to others; whenever Jesus appeared He delighted, consoled and instructed the apostles. We shall show perseverance; our Lord dieth no more.

THE ASCENSION

Gospel of the day.—Mark xvi. 14-20.

Two thoughts: the circumstances of the Ascension; our Lord in heaven.

I. **Circumstances.** Three chief points:

1. *Christ ascended into heaven.* He, the Word Incarnate, came down from heaven, and returned thither, opening the way to the regenerate members of the human race, who had been reconciled with God. Our Lord before His Ascension appeared to the eleven, gave them His parting instructions, conferred upon them His powers, and promised the perpetuity of the Church. Having blessed them and more than 500 disciples, He ascended slowly, leaving His footmarks on the

earth. They watched Him rise, and their testimony is firm and irrefutable. He rose by His own power, and was surrounded by a cloud, which formed a throne of glory for Him.

2. *Our Lord entered heaven,* accompanied by the saints and just men of the Old Dispensation, whom He had visited in Limbo. "He led captivity captive" (Eph. iv. 8). He rose, surrounded by hosts of angels, whose songs were echoed by other angels in heaven. The gates were opened: *Attollite portas, principes, vestras* (Ps. 23)—a very significant passage. There was joy in the courts of heaven. He was the *Rex gloriae, Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus virtutum. Gloria, laus et honor tibi sit, Rex Christe Redemptor* (office of Palm Sunday).

3. *Our Lord's place in heaven.* He sits above the angels. When His mission was accomplished, the elect, whom He had redeemed, became the angels' brethren, whilst He reigned supreme over all. He is in the highest heaven. "He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens" (Eph. iv. 10). He is at God's right hand. His glorious humanity is for ever united with the divine Word.

II. **Our Lord in heaven.** As He is there, let us pray to Him. He loved us and gave Himself for us (Eph. v. 2). His love is full of generosity: He came to seek and to save; He healed all; He went about doing good. His generosity is unfailing, for He always desires our salvation. It involves much self-sacrifice, since He endured many hardships, and the wicked still blaspheme Him. His generosity is inexhaustible, for His gifts are limitless. His reign will have no end. The prophets foretold this, and the angel of the incarnation repeated it: *Cujus regni non erit finis.* Since He is king of heaven and earth, let us serve Him well here, that we may share His glory hereafter. Earthly sovereigns are deprived of their thrones by death, and revolutions often destroy whole dynasties, but nothing can affect Christ's power. He will be for ever the supreme Head of His Church. Millions of martyrs have died for His sake, and saints have existed of every rank and in all nations.

Peroration. Let us celebrate our divine Master's triumph, meditate upon His glory, beg for His gifts and keep His commandments.

Alternative Plan

Christ our Ruler, Mediator and Judge

"The Lord Jesus . . . was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God."—Mark xvi. 19.

The Ascension is a beautiful festival. After His Resurrection our Saviour appeared at least ten times to the apostles and disciples, and more than 500 persons saw and spoke with Him. He led them to the Mount of Olives, gave them His farewell instructions, blessed them for the last time, and then rose up towards heaven, and they watched Him until a cloud hid Him from their sight. They continued gazing upwards, with their hearts full of love for their Master, and their souls inspired with zeal to go and accomplish their mission of converting the world. Is it not our duty, too, to follow our divine Master, and to bear in mind that beyond this life is that of heaven, where He awaits us; and where we shall see him for ever in all His marvelous divinity? Two angels appeared to the apostles, and told them that Christ would return in power and glory to judge the world. For ten days the disciples remained in the Cenacle, preparing for their sublime mission and expecting the divine Paraclete. What were their thoughts? Their Master had ascended to heaven as Ruler; He sat on the right hand of God as Mediator, and He will come again as Judge.

I. **Jesus Christ our Ruler.** St. Paul says: "The forerunner Jesus is entered for us" (Hebr. vi. 20). He had triumphed over the world, the devil, sin and death, therefore He had a fourfold right to the victor's crown. In Him, the Word Incarnate, our human race ascended to heaven. The body of man, being made of earth, returns to earth, but man, united with the Godhead, ascends to heaven. He is full of tenderness for us. He said: "I ascend to my Father and your Father." He uttered the words *Pater noster* with us. From Him we hear reproaches, invitations and promises—therefore *Sursum corda.* He is full of justice. He is the head, we are the members; we live by His life, faith and sacraments. There was an old prophecy: "Their

king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them" (Micheas ii. 13).

II. **He is our Mediator.** St. Paul says: "Jesus is entered . . . into heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us" (Hebr. ix. 24). He is a *powerful* Mediator, for He reminds His Father of His labors, wounds and death. "The Mediator between God and men." In heaven there is no change; He is "always living to make intercession for us" (Hebr. vii. 25), and He feels even more pity than He did on earth for the sick and suffering, and for those who are dead to God's grace. He is a *faithful* Mediator. He promised: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete" (John xiv. 16). Ten days later the Holy Ghost came down and still abides in the Church, sanctifying the souls of men.

III. **He will be our Judge.** The two angels said to the apostles: "He shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 11). He will come therefore in glory, in a luminous cloud, surrounded by angels and saints, and summoning the whole universe to judgment. He will come in sanctity. He is ever the enemy of sin, resisting the sinners who reject the redemption of His cross, and manifesting the zeal felt by His Church for their conversion. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He will come with blessing. He is generous and lavish towards His faithful followers. Ever since the Ascension, He has bestowed blessings upon them, and He will confirm upon them His divine gifts for the life to come. "Ascending on high He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8).

Peroration. Let us exult in His triumph and glory, follow in His footsteps, call upon Him and look forward to His coming.

Alternative Plan

Heaven for Christ and His Followers

"I go to prepare a place for you: I will come again and will take you to myself."—John xiv. 3.

Heaven for Christ, and for us with Him.

I. **Heaven for Christ.** Three points. (1) He will there com-

plete His triumph over His enemies. The enemies of God—in the first place Satan, who inspires all wicked men, and tries to ensnare God's faithful servants. Satan and his tools are also the enemies of men, whom they have robbed of truth—a gift of the intellect; love of God—a gift of the heart; and hope of heaven, a gift of the soul. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, has raised humanity to God. He Himself has been exalted to the highest degree of honor. His life was one of humility, obedience and suffering, and He died a shameful death on the cross; but He rose again in glory, remained for a short time on earth and was seen by a limited number of men, and then ascended in triumph to heaven. The just under the old dispensation and angels of heaven join in songs of exultation—*Attollite, portas,* etc. In heaven He enjoys the perfection of happiness. As man He suffered; therefore His body and soul deserve supreme glory. Here below no adequate glory could have been given Him; the Godhead united with humanity entitled Him to happiness such as does not exist in this world. He sits in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father, in bliss perfect, eternal and unchanging.

II. **Heaven for us with Him.** In 1 Cor. ii. 9 St. Paul quotes the words of Isaias (lxiv. 4): "Eye hath not seen . . . what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee." Heaven is God's kingdom. "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). It is prepared for men of every class, for the poor, who are obliged to serve others, for the weak and sickly, for the humble and meek, for the despised and persecuted. What is this kingdom? It is our infinite reward, the climax of all splendor, the possession of every good, glory everlasting. Heaven is God's house. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever" (Ps. 83, 5). Splendid castles and palaces are built by the rich and powerful in this world, but God is infinitely greater than they are, and His house is worthy of Him. The angels order everything there. The created universe is full of God's mighty works, and yet He made it with one word. Here we encounter vicissitudes and

poverty of all sorts; there *"Tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus"* (Apoc. xxi. 3), infinite in greatness, power and happiness. We shall see God in heaven, we shall understand all His ordinances and we shall love Him.

Alternative Plan

The Ascension: Detachment from this World

Our Lord left the earth, and is in heaven at God's right hand.

Two thoughts: The apostles in relation to Christ; Christ in relation to the apostles.

I. **The apostles in relation to Christ.** They asked Him: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). This question shows (a) that they were looking forward to the wealth and high position that they would enjoy with Him; (b) great affection for His person; (c) forgetfulness of the instructions in which He had tried to turn their thoughts to heaven: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). They were going to be disappointed. Our Lord made them understand the vanity of their hope. In spite of Julian the Apostate and many others since his time, there is still no kingdom of Israel. Our Lord deprived them first of Himself, the sensible object of their affection, and later on the city and the Temple were destroyed.

II. **Christ in relation to the apostles.** He wished to make their love supernatural. He entrusted to them the task of teaching and civilizing the world. He spoke of preaching His doctrine, of the trials and persecution that they would undergo, and He promised signs and wonders. Let us glance at the history of the apostles . . . everything was fulfilled. They were to establish a spiritual kingdom—the Church. They were to be animated by their Master's spirit: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). They were to center their thoughts on heaven: "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will take you to myself" (John xiv. 3). Let us impress these two things on our minds, the happiness of possessing heaven, and the necessity of exerting ourselves in order to gain it. Resolutions.

THE FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS

(May 3)

"He hath dedicated for us a new and living way."—Heb. x. 20.

This is the feast of the discovery of the True Cross (see the Breviary), and also the festival of the Propagation of the Faith, a work that has as its object the conversion of the heathen. Our Lord said: "I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all things to myself" (John xii. 32). Let us go to Him by this Way of the Cross, it is the shortest, safest and the only necessary way. It is the new way that He has shown us.

I. **The shortest way.** It is the way to heaven. The distance thither from earth is incalculable, but the good thief traversed it in a single day: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." "The pleasures of worldlings are their ruin, in a moment they go down to hell" (Job xxi. 13). St. Lawrence on his gridiron beheld himself already at the gate of heaven, and cried: *Gratias . . . quia januas tuas ingredi merui.* Our Lord pronounced those blessed who suffer persecution. He said: "Take up your cross and follow me." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." St. Stephen saw heaven opened.

II. **The safest way.** The way of pleasure is dangerous. "As much as she hath . . . lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her" (Apoc. xviii. 7). Our Lord shows us the Way of the Cross, and chose it for Himself. "It behoved Christ to suffer" (Luke xxiv). "Having joy set before Him, He endured the cross" (Hebr. xii. 2). "The whole life of Christ was a cross and martyrdom" (St. Bernard). The saints followed this road to heaven. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). Apart from this road, there is no salvation. St. Paul calls sinners: "Enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). Parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi).

III. **The necessary way.** No known saint ever passed from the joys of earth to those of heaven. In this world we are required to expiate our sins, but our Lord says: "Great is your reward in heaven." Hugh of St. Victor, commenting

on these words, says that the reward will be *multa, magna, pretiosa, diuturna.*

In Holy Scripture heaven is called a crown. "He crowneth thee with mercy" (Ps. cii. 4). "A crown of justice" (2 Tim. iv. 8). "He shall receive the crown of life" (James i. 12). "Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour" (Hebr. ii. 7). To us is addressed the warning: "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5). Heaven is a kingdom: "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom" (Luke xxii. 29). In Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas were at first regarded as gods, but were afterwards stoned and left for dead. They impressed upon their converts "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 21). Elsewhere St. Paul says: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).

Peroration. O my Saviour, I adore Thee hanging on Thy cross; I will serve Thee faithfully, and strive to win the heathen to faith in Thee, that they may praise Thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

(Sept. 14)

(The history of the festival is given in the Breviary)

In ancient times death upon the cross was regarded as most shameful, but among civilized nations the cross is held in honor, and many who are hostile to Christianity wear the cross as a decoration.

Three points: The cross of Christ is our glory, support and hope.

I. **Our glory.** The flag of a regiment is a patriotic emblem, and the more it is torn by bullets, the more glorious does it become. A soldier is bound to salute the flag, and when a regiment marches past, headed by its colors, every man takes off his hat. We are soldiers of Christ. "Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 3). Let us be proud of

our banner; when it was raised on Calvary, it overcame the devil and sin, and redeemed the world. The apostles carried it to many countries, and everywhere it brought Christianity and civilization to the inhabitants. May we never be so cowardly as to abandon it to the enemy of souls! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14).

II. **Our support.** When we are discouraged in time of trial, the devil becomes stronger and virtue more difficult. Let us then take up our cross. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by misfortune, and shed bitter tears of sorrow. Let us cling to the cross, and we shall find peace. "Making peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20). The power of the cross is recognized in hell, that is why the devil's instruments try to banish the cross wherever they can, from cemeteries, courts of justice, schools and public places; but they will have to answer for their action, when the Lord shall come to judgment.

III. **Our hope.** On the last day the cross will appear above the judgment seat. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Matt. xxiv. 30). It will be the support and safeguard of the righteous who have lived a holy life on earth, or who have done penance for their sins; but it will accuse and condemn sinners, who have forgotten Christ, His gospel and graces. "He that shall be ashamed of me . . . of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty" (Luke ix. 26). St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel" (Rom. i. 16). Constantine's vision: *In hoc signo vinces,* but also *Signum cui contradicetur* (Luke ii. 34).

Peroration. In this life we all need glory, support, hope, and we Christians, who desire to save our souls, find all these things in our Saviour's cross.

CHRISTMAS

"You shall find the Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."—LUKE ii. 12.

Why are we keeping a festival? Why are the altar rails crowded? Why are songs of joy ringing in our ears? It is

because we are celebrating the great day when angels brought good tidings to earth and made known the birth of our Saviour.

Sixteen centuries had elapsed since Moses delivered the Israelites and gave them the law on Mount Sinai. For a thousand years they had repeated the psalms of David, and longed for the coming of the Messias. Seven hundred and fifty years had passed since Rome was founded, that city which was destined to be for ever the capital of the nations. The oracles of paganism as well as the prophets of Israel foretold the approach of the day of deliverance and redemption. The world was at peace, when God, the ever adorable Trinity, sent down from the highest heaven Him who was to redeem man from sin, save him from hell, and open heaven to him. This is the day of which we are celebrating the anniversary, a day for ever blessed, when the Son of God, the Word Incarnate, became one of us at Bethlehem; the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the Saviour's birth, giving them this sign: "You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."

The Son of God came down from His glorious kingdom and assumed our weakness. He to whom creation owes its very existence, subjected Himself to the indignity of our human nature, and began a life of toil and hardship for our sake.

Behold Him, lying in a manger, which we may regard as a bed of suffering, a preacher's pulpit, and a throne of glory, for there He suffered, taught and reigned. O Mary, my Mother; touch my lips with a ray of that heavenly spirit which kindles the hearts and enlightens the minds of men. By thee it was that Christ was given to us; who else could better make us understand the lowliness and mystic glory of the manger where thou adorest Him? We delight in greeting thee with the words first used by Gabriel, the angel of the Incarnation, and say like him: *Ave Maria.*

I. **The manger, a bed of suffering.** Of the three divine Persons in the Blessed Trinity, the Son alone became man, without ceasing to be God. He was born in a stable, and laid in

a manger. His was a true body (refuting beforehand certain heresies), and He suffered more than we do. At birth, He lay in a wooden manger; at death He hung on a wooden cross. St. Bernard says that He wept, but not like other children. For our redemption He was beginning His long, voluntary martyrdom. Yet He had inspired the prophet to say that His delights were to be amongst us. When He slept, His heart was watchful, surveying the intense suffering of the thirty-three years that lay before Him. What a prospect! His poverty makes that of others noble and meritorious. Your deprivations are united with those of Christ.

II. **The manger, a teacher's pulpit.** God sent His only Son from heaven to teach us. "I have given Him . . . for a leader and a master to the Gentiles" (Is. lv. 4).

His first triumph was over idolatry. Mary, Joseph and the Magi were the first worshippers of the God-man. Every teacher must know how to illustrate his statements by examples. Christ began at once to preach by His example contempt of worldly vanities, love of mankind, and hidden virtues.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus tells that the pupils in Origen's school learned more from what they saw than from what they heard, because their master practiced what he taught. How much more then may Christians learn in the school of Bethlehem!

When the angels were silent, the shepherds entered the stable; they could not hear any instruction given by this divine Teacher, but they could see the Word, and His grace spoke to their hearts. "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us" (Titus ii. 11, 12). Not yet did He make known the mysteries of heaven, but only the beginning of His doctrine: "that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, justly and godly in this world" (ibid).

Later on, He said: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In the manger He was Himself a little child, our example.

III. **The manger, a throne of glory.** Jesus Christ was King of kings and Lord of lords. Where was His court? Was it

the stable? And His throne? Was it the manger? St. Bernard says that the swaddling clothes were more precious than any purple, the manger more glorious than the gilded thrones of kings (Serm. I in Epiph. Serm. 4 Christmas Eve). In the office of the day we read: *Magnificatus est Rex pacificus super omnes reges universae terrae.* Why is His magnificence contrasted with His humiliation? Everything connected with Him becomes great and divine. Even the martyrs rendered their chains and dungeons sacred. Kings condemn criminals to death; Christ came to die for the whole human race. Kings exact homage, but kings came to worship at the manger where the divine Child was laid. Kings possess limited power, but Christ reigns supreme for ever on earth, in heaven and in hell. "Every knee shall bow." The angels came down from heaven on account of the manger, and sang its glory. They returned visibly, carrying with them its praises, but some remained, unseen though really present, to adore the Child, the King of glory. St. Epiphanius originated this idea.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas glory is *clara cum laude notitia.* Now at the first Christmas Christ's glory in the manger was better known by human beings on earth, than was that of the Word in heaven. Then He was worshipped only in this world by Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi, and as at that time there were still no saints in heaven, the manger-throne was truly glorious.

Peroration. However we may consider it, the manger tends to the divine Child's glory. Regarded as His bed of pain, we see Him already suffering and weeping for us. Regarded as a teacher's desk, we see Him inculcating true virtue and divine doctrines. Regarded as His throne of glory, we see Him in His abasement reigning superior to all earthly kings, transforming the lowly stable into His heaven, and the wooden manger into His throne. Let the great, the learned and the pleasure-lovers of the world bow down before Him. Behold the Saviour, *natus est vobis.*

Alternative Plan

"There was . . . a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest."—Luke ii. 13.

On this festival we may think of our Lord, our Lady and the angels, three different kinds of beings. We must try to love our Lord, as Mary loved Him; to praise Him, as the angels praised Him; to seek Him, as the shepherds sought Him.

I. **To love Him.** From the moment of His birth, He has asked for our hearts. Can we refuse to love Him? He became man "for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us" (Eph. ii. 4). In Genesis (iii. 22) we read that God said: "Behold Adam is become as one of us." Christ was the second Adam, true God—"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

Our Lord came down to the manger, that we might be able to rise to heaven. St. Bernard emphasizes the word *nobis* in the sentence *Parvulus natus est nobis,* and remarks that He was born *for us,* not for His own sake, nor for that of the angels, who possessed Him in His divine majesty, and needed not to have Him as a Child (*Hom.* 9, *sup. missus est*). Christ took upon Himself our poverty that He might load us with benefits. When Samuel went to the house of Isai to seek and anoint a successor to Saul, he said, as each of Isai's sons was presented to him: "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." At length the father brought forward David, the youngest son. The divine Word chose not Seraphim, nor Cherubim, nor angels, but came down to man (Hebr. ii.). He took upon Himself our evils to give us His wealth.

II. **To praise Him.** St. Maximus, bishop of Tauris, used to say that a true Christian ought to praise God at all times. Let us begin by praising Him for coming to the manger in visible form. St. Augustine says: *Cantet vox, cantet vita, cantent facta* (in Ps. 148).

1. *Cantet vox.* Remember the three Hebrews in the furnace (Daniel iii.). They sang God's praises in the canticle which is

recited in the divine office and at the funeral of little children. The Psalmist calls upon angels, powers, stars and musical instruments to praise God (Ps. 148 and 150). When the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, Moses sang a beautiful canticle. Here at Bethlehem the angels sang in honor of our Lord's birth, although the redemption did not affect them.

2. *Cantet vita.* St. Augustine bids us praise God not only with our lips and voices, but with our conscience and in our life (*In ps.* 148). The divine Child is beginning here a life of goodness, not despising our infirmities; a life of wisdom, the best means of accomplishing our redemption; a life of power, for He could perform no greater work; a life of justice, since as Man He was about to save man.

3. *Cantent facta.* Long ago at Athens some one asked: "What is at the same time greatest and least?" Some philosophers suggested the pupil of the eye, which, though very small, can see the stars. Others the heart of man, which is capable of aspiring to great heights (Plutarch tells us that Alexander wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer). Others made various answers. If only they had known the manger in Bethlehem! The divine Child "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. ii. 6). He was great and worthy of all praise (Ps. 47, 95, 112, 114); but He made Himself small and lovable, as St. Bernard says. "Let us therefore praise and love Him in all our actions." (St. Aug. *in ps.* 34 *conc.* 2.)

III. **To seek Him.** The shepherds said: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass." So they went in search of the divine Child. The Magi asked information of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Herod, and the learned doctors. . . . You look for eternal happiness in worldly enjoyments and pleasures . . . but the shepherds simply went to the place where they heard that He was. Do you go to Holy Communion and the Church? That is where you will find the living Bread, God with us. In the Book of Canticles the spouse exclaims: "Shew me, O Thou whom my heart loveth, where Thou . . . liest" (Cant. i. 6). St. Luke tells us that the shepherds came "with haste," and St. Ambrose remarks: *Vides festinare pastores; nemo cum desidia Christum requirit*

(*in* C. 2. *Lucae*). If you fail to find Him, it is because you do not seek Him with haste and zeal (St. Bede). Let us therefore seek Him, as St. Bernard says, with all our heart and with all our mind (Serm. 79). Many specious reasons for delay suggest themselves. Longstanding habits, sins hard to confess, the burden of fasting, prayer and public worship. Take the shepherds as an example: "Let us go over," *transeamus,* passing by this or that place, this or that person. Do as you are commanded, however difficult the task may be. Remember Saul at Damascus: "Why persecutest thou me?"

Peroration. Mary, angels, shepherds teach us to love, praise and seek Jesus. Three examples of three things for us to do. He lifts us up, draws us to Himself and loads us with benefits. In Him our human nature is exalted, supernaturalized, and for ever blessed. Let us look at the manger, the prelude to the cross, which won heaven for us. O Mary, my Mother, I behold thee kneeling before this lowly manger; in thy company I adore and recognize my Saviour.

Alternative Plan

Christmas

"I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."—Luke ii. 10, 11.

What does this great mystery require of us? We owe our divine Lord our tribute of adoration, gratitude and fidelity.

I. Adoration. Our Saviour is full of greatness and majesty. After speaking of His Incarnation, St. John says: "We saw His glory" (i. 14). He lost nothing of what He is as God, but assumed our humanity with its attendant infirmities. He had body and soul as we have, but the divine Word suffered no change. We remain the same, although our clothing may vary from time to time. He did not assume the nature of an angel, nor that of a human being born in a palace. . . .

He showed us what He could do as God. This was the highest achievement of His power. In the Magnificat our

Lady exclaimed: "He hath shewed might in His arm." St. John Chrysostom says: "I wonder at God in Mary's womb, I wonder at His omnipotence in the swaddling clothes of the manger; there above all He is wonderful, mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace" (Is. ix. 6). He obtains all that as God He expects, viz., strict satisfaction for the past, and worship in the future. The angels did well to ascribe to God glory in the highest, for He possesses it in heaven, and man enjoys peace. This worship was paid Him at the cost of many sacrifices, by Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi. . . .

II. **Gratitude.** Our Saviour is full of goodness and tenderness. "God so loved the world" as to show men the greatest compassion. The human race was overwhelmed in misery. *Magnus e caelo medicus venit, quia magnus in terra jacebat aegrotus; voluit medicus aegrotare ut aegros sanaret; ipse ad aegrotum venit medicus* (St. Augustine).

His love was lavish and generous. He became the companion of our misery, and He was destined to be our food and our reward. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). God and man were separated by an infinite distance, but Christ put on our nature and became a child, full of charm. "Taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 7). He was "tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Hebr. iv. 15).

III. **Fidelity.** Our Saviour is full of grace and truth. In order that we might reach heaven, He showed us a *new* road. In the manger His humility, poverty and suffering were opposed to the vices of men. Isaias says: "Thy eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee: This is the way, walk ye in it" (xxx. 20). Let us then in thought visit Bethlehem, and behold the stable, the manger, the holy Child's tears and swaddling clothes. This road is *unique*. The manger and all the other things are the sign which shall judge the world. Error is set aside; it could find no place in God's wisdom. "Being in the form of God, He . . . emptied Himself"

(Phil. ii. 6). We have here the grace of God instructing all men. The road is *easy*. Will you dare to plunge into the vanities of the world, instead of adoring the Infant Saviour? Supreme majesty destroys itself, and an insignificant worm is puffed up with pride. Let us strive to be little like Him; sweetness and humility have opened heaven to us.

Peroration. I picture our Lady kneeling beside the manger; with her how many have felt ardent desires, how many have sought our Saviour assiduously, and worshipped Him with profound adoration! With all the strength of my being, I offer Him my most fervent love, my devotion, my unswerving loyalty. I resolve to adore Him, in spite of His weakness; to ask His favors, in spite of His poverty; to listen to His teaching, even when He is silent. The stable and the manger were the palace of His choice; let us adorn our hearts with the virtues that He desires to see in us.

SERMONS ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Forty Hours' Devotion, Holy Thursday, and other Occasions

FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION

The Holy Eucharist and the Sacred Heart

I. **Gift of Christ's grace.** Grace is a supernatural gift. (Catechism.) In the sacraments God gives grace suited to the various circumstances of life. Five are intended to sanctify individuals, two affect society; these are the sacraments of Orders, for the creation of a ministry in the Church, and, Matrimony which unites man and wife and is the foundation of family life. All the sacraments are designed to bring men to God. In the Holy Eucharist we receive God Himself, the Author of grace. *Hoc est Corpus meum. Hic est calix Sanguinis mei. In cruce latebat sola Deitas, sed hic latet simul et humanitas* (Hymn *Adoro te devote*). Jesus in the Eucharist, the

God-man, is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things. Baptism is the first sacrament. An unbaptized person is not a Christian and cannot receive Holy Communion. One who is not confirmed lacks strength to persevere in the Christian way of life. Without the Sacrament of Penance there can be no absolution, no Holy Communion.

II. **Gift of Christ's words.** He is the Word of God made Man, therefore He is uncreated speech. He speaks in the Gospel, where we find instruction for individuals and for society, and directions how we may reach heaven. He speaks in the material world: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John i. 3). He speaks in the intellectual world: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Human learning is very insignificant in comparison with the doctrines revealed by God, and it has no value at all if it is not in harmony with them. He speaks in the spiritual world: "He was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." We cannot rise to God except through Christ and His faith, words and service.

III. **Gift of Christ's heart.** He is "a merciful and gracious Lord" (Ps. 110, 4). The heart is the power directing our zeal and actions. The Heart of Jesus worked miracles, cured the sick, raised the dead. In the Holy Eucharist we have His Heart abiding with us: "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). Take pains to study His words; they were prompted by His Sacred Heart, which practices His teaching.

Peroration. Look at the tabernacle and remember that Jesus is there.

Permanence of the Gift of Jesus Christ

"My delights are to be with the children of men."—Prov. viii. 31.

We do not tire of happiness—we mourn when we lose those whom we love—we should like to keep for ever what we value most highly.

Our Lord gives us the Holy Eucharist continually, on the altar, at Holy Communion, in the Tabernacle.

I. **On the altar.** The holy sacrifice is celebrated every day, at every hour. Have you ever seen a Eucharistic clock? As the earth rotates, it is always morning in some part of the world, and consequently there is never an hour when the holy sacrifice is not being offered, and when a priest is not standing at the altar. Why do we delay to offer ourselves to Jesus on the altar of our hearts? Might we not at least be more recollected during Mass?

II. **At Holy Communion.** We receive divine nourishment. *Ego sum panis vivus qui dat vitam mundo* (John vi).

At every Mass the priest communicates, and there is never a day when none of the faithful receive Holy Communion. Everywhere we meet with daily communicants. All may approach the Holy Table provided they have faith and are in the state of grace. In the Holy Eucharist we receive the pledge of immortality. *Et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die.*

Come then, weary souls, ye who are tossed by the tempests of life, ye who are heavy-laden, slighted, discouraged—"Come to me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28).

III. **In the tabernacle.** The church is the house of God; in it is the font where you were baptized, the confessional where you receive absolution, and the pulpit whence you are instructed—but font, confessional and pulpit are not always in use. In the church, too, is the tabernacle, where our Lord abides. As soon as you cross the threshold you see the altar, the lamp and the tabernacle, within which is the sacred ciborium containing our Lord in His sacramental presence. Let us adore Him! Above the church stands the cross, our Lord's standard, and in the belfry hangs the bell, which seems to be His voice, calling to us, as He opens His arms in pity.

Universality of the Gift of Christ

"Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—Matt. xi. 28.

In the Holy Eucharist our Lord gives Himself to us *all* and *always*. Every Catholic, no matter of what age or rank, can receive Him; every nation, no matter where it is situated nor how it is ruled, belongs to Him. He is in the Church, in spite of heresies, schisms and persecutions. Here we have a three-fold universality.

I. **Every Catholic.** As soon as a child is born, our Lord invites it to be baptized; baptism is the first condition for the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Children, follow Christ's example, study, listen, ask questions. When He was twelve years old, He spent three days in retreat in the Temple. Maidens, Jesus wishes your pure hearts to be His tabernacles filled with virtues. Remember St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Catharine of Alexandria, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Rose of Lima, St. Margaret Mary. . . . Full grown, men, come to the altar and derive there strength and courage to lead a holy life. Remember St. Isidore and St. Fiacre, who worked in the fields, St. Louis and St. Ferdinand who were kings, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, the beggar; these were all men of faith and virtue.

Old men, made wise by experience and worn out with labor, come to the Holy Eucharist; it will be your reward and the pledge of eternal life. Many complain of their lot; the poor—but Jesus was poor, the rich—why do they not exert themselves to help the poor?—widows and orphans—but God sanctifies their tears. Let all come to the Holy Eucharist!

II. **Nations** are, as it were, great families. History records their achievements and honors their heroes. But illustrious men pass away, and the souls of the humble, sanctified by the Holy Eucharist, are those that God admits to heaven. Nations boast of their political life, their arts and civilization, but nothing is permanent; even victories prove to be disasters . . . laws hostile to God are enacted, and blasphemous works are published. It is indeed true that "there hath stood one in the

midst of you, whom you know not" (John i. 26). Would that men might repent and return to God! Whenever God is set aside, crime increases, because there is no restraint on men's passions.

III. **The Church.** From the beginning she has been assailed by two enemies, but God is always with her.

1. Persecution has made many martyrs. They had received Holy Communion and carried the sacred Host with them that they might receive It again, and so they triumphed, and the Church grew and was victorious.

2. Human intelligence has produced heresies and schisms; but this very opposition has called forth scholars, ardent Catholics and more abundant good works, and so God's kingdom was extended. Study the course of history. Our Lord promised to be with us always, even to the consummation of the world; and the Church preserves His doctrine, Spirit and the Holy Eucharist.

Peroration. Let us love and trust God, making Him known by our lives, and keeping Him in the tabernacle of our hearts. May He be praised and loved for ever and ever. Amen.

The Gift of the Holy Eucharist

"Come to me, all you that labour."—Matt. xi. 28.

These words are peculiarly suitable to to-day's solemnity. They were addressed not only to the people of our Lord's time and country, but to men of every age and generation. There are always sad and weary souls that need God's help.

It was our divine Saviour's will to remain ever present in the Holy Eucharist, and He abides in the tabernacle, calling us. It is His desire that in each church in turn and each diocese there should be a solemn festival, when all Catholics assemble round the altar. This is the festival of Adoration. You have come hither in answer to the call of God and His priest; a representative of almost every family in the parish is present; I praise and bless you for it. A number of priests from neighboring churches are taking part in this solemnity, praying with and for you. They are witnesses of

your spirit of faith, and will tell their parishioners how much you have edified them to-day. It is to my long-standing friendship with your parish priest that I owe the privilege of addressing you, to derive some useful and fruitful lessons from this festival. O divine Saviour, we have all heard Thy call; Thou art really present here in the Holy Eucharist; Thou callest souls that are burdened, crushed, weighed down by the troubles of this world, and often, too, by the reproaches of their own conscience. With authority Thou invitest us all to come to Thee.

In the Holy Eucharist God bestows on us so many benefits and shows us so much mercy, that it behooves us to do our best to understand what it is, to the end that we may lead better lives. It is truly a gift from God, permanent and universal. . . . Let us consider it simply under these aspects.

I. **A gift from God.** On Holy Thursday our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist. He had promised to do so, but no one remembered His words. It was a gift from God. We have here:

1. *The grace of God* (definition in the Catechism). Grace is given in all the sacraments, each of which has its special object, but it is given pre-eminently in the Eucharist, because this is the center of all the other sacraments, and the reason for their institution. Everything in the material, intellectual and spiritual world belongs to God and exists for Him. Our Lord gave us God's word in the gospel; it undoubtedly was given for individuals, families, and society, in order that men might reach heaven. But Christ is Himself the Word of God, the second Person in the blessed Trinity. He lay in the manger, died on the Cross, rose again from the dead, and desires to remain with us in the Eucharist. Our hearts direct our actions, and it was Christ's sacred Heart that took pity on the poor, the sick and the lepers, and led Him to cure them. But we have Jesus Christ here in our midst. His Heart has loved us to the uttermost limit; it was impossible for Him to do more for us. Do you recognize the gift of God? The Eucharist is the most perfect gift that God could make to man. "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James i. 17).

II. **Permanence of the Eucharist.** Our Lord, when speaking of the Holy Spirit, said: "He shall abide with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 17). The same words apply to the Holy Eucharist, which is always on our altars and in the tabernacle.

Every day and every hour the holy sacrifice is being offered. It is not noon at the same moment all over the world. Somewhere or other it is always morning, and somewhere or other Mass is being said. (The Eucharistic clock). Are you ready to sacrifice your meannesses and faults on the altar of your hearts? Are you resolved always to be recollected in front of the altar, so that your souls may be enlightened and glow in the divine rays of the Sun of Justice? At the Holy Table we receive divine nourishment. Here is the table prepared by our Father in heaven, but many wayfarers forget God amidst the sorrows and sufferings, the evil and despair that beset them. "Come to me, all ye who are burdened," here is the source of life eternal.

"The tabernacle contains the Holy Eucharist, and the church contains the tabernacle. From afar we may see the cross, our Lord's standard, high up on the church, and from a still greater distance we hear the bells calling us to come to the church, where we shall find our Saviour, as truly present as He was in Capharnaum and in Judea. Let us love Him, pray to Him, visit Him, and be His living tabernacles.

III. **Universality of the Holy Eucharist.** In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: *Subjecit sibi omnia ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus* (1 Cor. xv. 28). Christ ordered all things with a view to the Holy Eucharist, that He might lavish His benefits upon men of every age and nation and the whole Church.

As soon as a child is born, He calls it to enter His Church by way of baptism. When its intellect and reason develop, He calls it to His school. The catechism, and later on the gate of the sanctuary is reached, and the child makes its first Communion. Our Lord wishes the pure heart of every maiden to be His tabernacle; full grown men find in the Eucharist strength to fulfil their duties and do their work. It bestows on the aged the crown of wisdom and good counsel. Unhappy

are they of whom it must be said that years make men old, but not necessarily wise.

Let not the poor man forget the words: "Blessed are the poor," nor let the rich man shut his eyes to the fact that his wealth is given him by God, in order that he may help the poor. Widows and orphans may weep at some grave in the churchyard; remember how Christ rewarded the tears shed by the widow of Naim. The Holy Eucharist is for every nation and family. A nation is a great family of human beings. Each has produced great men. Consider the battlefields, in many cases places of defeat. For every one there is an angel, lifting up his hands in supplication towards heaven. Christ is the light to the revelation of the gentiles, as holy Simeon declared (Luke ii. 32). The Holy Eucharist is given to the whole Church in every age. Whence did the martyrs derive their courage? From the holy Viaticum preserved in their houses. Whence do the saints gain strength to resist the assaults of the devil? From the Eucharist. If you read the history of the Church, you will soon discover how the Eucharist inspires and supports men. These are great thoughts that I have put before you in simple words. Do you now understand better the divine influence exerted in the world by the holy Eucharist, and the precious fruits that you ought to gain from it?

Let your preparation for the great day when you go to Holy Communion be more careful than ever, be more than ever fervent; Jesus Christ is there always and for us all. Love Him, serve Him, think often of Him, and then your lives will be those of true Christians.

The Eucharist, a Sacrament and a Sacrifice

"I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven."—John vi. 51.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is really present in the Holy Eucharist. In Holy Mass He renews the sacrifice of the cross on Calvary. In Holy Communion He gives Himself to us. These three points are suggested by to-day's solemnity. It is of great

importance for us to understand the real Presence, the holy Sacrifice and Holy Communion.

I. **The Real Presence.** The Eucharist contains our Lord Jesus Christ really; it is useless to raise objections, the truth cannot be gainsaid. Our Saviour is there, truly present, body, blood, soul and divinity under the species or appearance of bread and wine, consecrated at Holy Mass.

Let me give briefly two proofs of this statement. St. John records the words in which our Lord promised the Eucharist, and although the sixth chapter of his Gospel is a mere summary of our Saviour's discourse, it is perfectly clear. What did Christ say? "With five loaves and two fishes, multiplied by my power so that there should be enough for each one of you, I have just fed a crowd of 5000 persons miraculously. But there is another bread which is to give life to the world, bread from heaven, divine food. I am this bread of life. My flesh is really food, my blood is really drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."

You see how plainly our Lord promised the Eucharist. The second proof is this: Our Saviour instituted and bestowed the Eucharist as He promised. The other evangelists and St. Paul all record the circumstances. In the evening of Holy Thursday, at the Paschal supper prescribed by the Mosaic law, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to God, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His apostles, saying: "Take ye and eat. This is my Body that shall be delivered for you; do this for a commemoration of me." Then, taking the chalice, . . . etc. These are the words of God. Jesus Christ changed the bread into His body, the wine into His blood, for He said: "This *is* my Body which shall be delivered." The same evening Judas delivered Him to His enemies, and the next day He was crucified. He said: "This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you." On the morrow His blood was shed when He was scourged and crowned with thorns in Pilate's Praetorium, and it was shed still more abundantly on the cross, when the nails were driven through His hands and feet, and the lance was thrust into His side.

He declared therefore that the bread and wine were the very

Body and Blood, which would be seen before Pilate and on Calvary. It must be acknowledged that He could not have given us any proofs more easy to verify. We believe then that He was and is in the Holy Eucharist just as really as He was in the Cenacle and on Calvary. Someone may say that he does not understand, but does nothing exist except what we understand?

Let us pass on to the second point: The Eucharist renews the sacrifice of the cross in Holy Mass.

II. **The Holy Sacrifice.** You have heard the words: "This is my Body which shall be delivered . . . my Blood which shall be shed for you." "You shall shew the death of the Lord until He come." These words are quite clear. In the first place, in the Eucharist there is the same Body and Blood that were seen on the cross, when Jesus Christ offered Himself in sacrifice for the salvation of the world. Hence each renewal of the change of bread into His Body and of wine into His Blood was to be a renewal of the sacrifice of the cross. In order that this renewal should take place continually until our Lord's second coming at the end of the world, He bestowed upon His apostles, and through them upon their lawful successors, the power to do in His name what He Himself had done. These divine words comprise all these four points.

Now in every Mass the consecration by Christ is renewed; hence in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass we have at the same time the sacrifice of the cross and the apostles' Communion. The Mass continues the sacrifice of the cross, because Christ continues at the altar the offering that He made of Himself on Calvary. It is still the same sacrifice, the same victim, the same priest. The same sacrifice, because He willed that there should still be a sacrifice: "My body which shall be delivered. The same victim, because, according to His own words, He is the same in the Eucharist as He was in the Cenacle and on Calvary. The same priest, because our priesthood is the same that He gave to His apostles, and that they have transmitted to their successors from age to age. One more thought on this subject. The Apostles' Communion on Holy Thursday has always been renewed by Catholics, as it is now. The Holy

Eucharist unites our souls more closely with Christ, and is a pledge of eternal life.

III. **Holy Communion.** Why did our Saviour institute the holy Eucharist under the species of bread and wine? The answer is easy. He said: "Take and eat," "take and drink," "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." This was equivalent to saying: "I am the bread of your souls in the Eucharist, just as bread and wine are the food of your bodies." Our Lord had said several times: "Unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you shall not have life in you." We must go to Holy Communion to receive Him. Of course the Eucharist is not material food for the sustenance of our bodies; it is divine Bread, Jesus Christ, come down from heaven to give life to our souls.

Life to our souls! Our intellect and mind can be satisfied with human truths and knowledge, but they are not concerned here, nor is our understanding, which is nourished by the truths of faith. Our whole souls are affected, for our Lord reserves for them the real, eternal life, which is a supernatural existence that they share with Him. He did not stop short at declaring: "He that believeth in me shall have life everlasting"; He went on to say: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day, for my flesh is meat indeed."

Thus we must first believe our Lord's words, and then receive Him in Holy Communion. Why should we receive Him? Because Communion is a close and wonderful union with God. It transforms us into Him, so that we no longer live except in Him and for Him, and it is also the pledge of the blessed union that we shall enjoy with Him in heaven. It is solid food, which enables us to walk with courage on our heavenward way, and that is why it is called "the corn of the elect."

Our reason urges us to communicate, and so receive a God who is infinitely great, full of goodness, and the source of all

sanctity. Necessity impels us to do so, that we may be able to fulfil our duties better, to acquire merit and persevere in virtue.

O God, how many reasons I have for loving Thee! Thy Eucharist is indispensable to our souls! There Thou abidest, there Thou dost sacrifice Thyself, and there Thou loadest us with Thy graces.

My brethren; you desire your hearts to be living tabernacles, where you may offer your prayers and good works to our Lord. Try to love Him more, for souls thus prepared are at least less unworthy to approach Him.

FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION

I

Life is a double banquet; both banquets from God. One is, "The meat that perisheth," precious only to sense and reason; the other, "That which endureth unto life everlasting," precious only to "the spirit," and "the eye of faith." To-day invited to this banquet of the soul. We must accept this Bread of life or perish.

1. **World, too, as well as Christ, offers us a eucharist.** We must choose between them. The earth offers us its flesh and blood, visible and palpable, a food ever relished by the carnal-minded, the Capharnaites of the day. The glorification of the world's eucharist implies the lowering of that of the spirit. It is in the long run but as husks to swine. Banquet to which we are invited to-day uplifts, sates and glorifies.

2. **How dependent we are on sense.** Creatures of "flesh and blood" all around. God bends to our lowly nature, reveals Himself here in a vesture of matter, first, in Creation; next, in the Incarnation, and, lastly, in the Eucharist. His own very flesh and blood. Faith needed to discern Him in all three.

3. **The wonders of faith.** How the Divine Presence is realized in the banquet of the Eucharist to which we are invited to-day. Belief the bedrock of all knowledge, sacred and profane. How the "Good Shepherd" feeds His flock.

Conclusion. Men ever digging "cisterns that hold not water." Two great evils in thought of day; two false gods, in short, reason and the flesh. World lies grovelling before them. We worship in faith, the eternal reason and ever-living flesh of God made man for us, the soul's banquet to which all are invited.

II

Common meal a pledge of mutual friendship and fellowship. Holy Eucharist a sacred banquet binding us to our Lord and to one another. To accept an invitation to a meal involves some form of preparation more or less elaborate. A lesson to be learned from priest washing his hands and putting on speckless robes ere personating Christ in banquet of the Mass.

1. **All invited** to this "great supper" in holy Communion; and, therefore, means provided for securing the needful wedding robe of grace. Difference between worthy and unworthy guests; strictly speaking, none worthy, but all bound to be **not unworthy.** Saints and sinners need preparation. Two classes here to-day, those consciously unworthy by deadly sin; the tepid, or even fervent, called upon to be fervent, and still more fervent.

2. **Eucharist sacramental food for living,** not for dead. Sinners, then, the lepers of the Church, must plunge into the healing waters of the new pool of Siloe, the Jordan stream of the Sacrament of Penance, reviving and fertilizing the Church of God. "Go, show yourselves to the priests" to get back robe dyed in Blood of Lamb. Need of sincere confession. Vain excuses from this duty.

3. **Even those not in absolute need of confession must prepare.** All need greater fervor. How the great time-spirit, called in the Gospel the world, hinders fervent, and, therefore, "frequent and daily Communion," the ideal aimed at by the Church.

Conclusion. Exhort both classes, saints and sinners, to the form of preparation they respectively need.

III

Incident of our Lord meeting the Samaritan woman at the well. What He meant by "Gift of God" and "Water of life." Everything we call ours, the gift of God. Our Lord gladly receives what is His own from hand and heart of His creatures.

1. **God's gifts in nature**: how subtle, complex, beautiful and wonderful they are. The wells of creation never run dry. But these waters of life, these natural gifts, never fill and much less sate the heart of man: "He who drinks of these waters shall thirst again." The lower animals contented therewith, but not their lord and master, man. Why? Because made for higher things; God alone can fill the heart. He gives Himself to us under veils of Eucharist, pledge of eternal life and perfect bliss.

2. **"The Gift of God" in the Host** appears a tiny wafer, yet it encircles and enshrines God-made-man for us. The whole circle of created things fails to quench the thirst of the soul, as does the reception of that sacred particle; it floods the soul with heavenly peace and joy—germ of bliss to come. On earth, food, the basis and promise, in children, of their growth in bodily and mental vigor. It builds up the citizens of this world: such is the eucharistic "gift of God" in His kingdom, the Church.

3. **What this gift is to us.** Our companion, our friend, our food even. Here our Lord comes to us in the Host; noiselessly, unostentatious. Gives Himself unstintedly in all His fulness.

Conclusion. *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi?* Resolve: (a) To accept the gift of God. (b) Seek peace and happiness therein.

HOLY MASS

"It is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use, become the friends of God."—Wisd. vii. 14.

In His mercy and goodness God indeed bestows an infinite treasure of graces upon us here. Let us to-day consider two of the many reasons that exist for taking part in the holy sacrifice, viz., its necessity and utility.

I. **Its necessity.** St. Paulinus says: "Everywhere there are pitfalls, everywhere the sword; our life is full of struggles, snares and temptations; rivers of fire overwhelm us. Therefore we need this divine Sacrifice, which gives us grace amidst so many dangers, and strengthens us so that we may not fall" (Epist. de Gazophilacio). What is the Holy Sacrifice? It is the holocaust where the victim was consumed entirely in worship of God. It is the Sin-offering, part of which was burnt and the rest eaten by the priests, being a propitiatory sacrifice. It is the peace-offering of thanksgiving and petition, a third of which was burnt in God's honor, a third belonged to the priest, and a third to the person supplying the offering, for it is Eucharistic. Moreover our Lord declared that it should be a commemoration of His Passion. (St. Thomas Aquinas, III. p. qu. 102, a 3).

II. **Its utility.** It appeases God's anger, and He then bestows upon us the spirit of penance, remission of our sins, and grace (Conc. Trid. sess. 21. c. 2).

The temporal punishment due to our sins is remitted. The Holy Sacrifice benefits both the living and the souls in purgatory (Ibid. loc. cit.).

It obtains for us spiritual and temporal graces; our Lord intercedes with His Father on behalf of the Church and every faithful Catholic, especially those assisting at the sacrifice. It makes up what is wanting in our gratitude to God for all His benefits. Hence it behooves us to come to Mass, pray well during it, and carry away its fruits with us.

The Tabernacle and the Holy Eucharist

"Behold the tabernacle of God with men."—Apoc. xxi. c.

Our Saviour abides in the tabernacle; it is the throne of grace whence He hears and answers our prayers. The Church is His home. "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them." Over the entrance of some churches we read the words: *Domus Dei et porta caeli.* A church is a stone or wood covering for the tabernacle.

I. **Under the old law.** In theory the universe was God's temple, and in each dwelling was the sanctuary where He was worshipped, and the heart of each man was the altar of sacrifice, gratitude and love. But hearts stained with sin became unworthy to be altars, and the patriarchs consecrated the stone of sacrifice, pouring oil upon it. Still the entire universe and the vault of heaven continued to be the temple of God. Man, however, made all things serve his own sinful ends, and handed over all creation to iniquity. A place was required where God might be worshipped in holiness, so Moses set up the tabernacle in the wilderness, making it of costly kinds of perfumed wood, fine linen and purple. The mysterious cloud—God's instructions to Moses. This was the first building erected for the worship of God. The Temple was built by Solomon, according to the same plan as the tabernacle, but on a much larger scale. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in it. The utterances of the prophets, the people, type of christianity. *Omnia in figura contingebant illis* (1 Cor. x. 11). This temple was destroyed, and another built to which our Lord came and foretold its final overthrow.

II. **Under the new law.** The Cenacle was where the first Eucharist was celebrated. Jesus our Saviour suffered poverty and want in the manger at Bethlehem. Jesus our Redeemer underwent the humiliation of the cross on Calvary. But for Jesus in the Eucharist was needed *cenaculum magnum, stratum* (Luke xxiii. 12, Mark xiv. 15). Splendor accompanied His self-abasement in the Eucharist. The churches were in the catacombs, in forests and lonely places, even prisons and private houses served as churches during the first 300 years of persecution; but at last the emperors became Christians, and then basilicas were built, and later on those magnificent monastic churches and cathedrals, with which no modern edifice can compare. The persecuted religion had triumphed, for it was the work not of men, but of God, and men exerted their utmost skill in beautifying the buildings where He was present in the Eucharist.

III. **The parish church.** A church, being the abode of our Lord in the Eucharist, ought not to resemble an ordinary dwelling. A large room would serve as a place of assembly, but it would not be a church. Hither come rich and poor, here is the font where

all alike are baptized. For good and bad alike are the same pulpit, confessionals and altar. The sacraments are for all, on the same conditions. Do not remind me of the numbers of candles and all the pomp and ceremony at the marriages and funerals of the wealthy—these distinctions were invented by men, and to men you may complain of them—fix your thoughts on Jesus in the Sacred Hosts.

Quam sit dispar exitus. Sinners, unfaithful Catholics, you forget the promises made at your baptism, you despise the teaching of the Church and the grace offered you in the Sacrament of Penance. You either refuse the Bread of life, or receive it unworthily. When death comes, and you are carried hither for the last time, the priest may offer the Holy Sacrifice for you, but God may not hear. Your souls have appeared already before another tribunal, and of many a bad Catholic it will be said: "He was buried in hell" (Luke xvi. 22).

The just, good and faithful Catholics, you who are true to your promises made in baptism and to the practice of your religion, to you the church is the house of prayer, of love for our Lord in the Eucharist, and here you enjoy His love in His sacramental presence.

Peroration. O God, hear Thy people, when they come to Thy sanctuary. Grant the requests of the afflicted; give grace to those who are weary of the world and weighed down by suffering and remorse. For the sake of Thy love for men, in Thy Eucharistic presence, and also of our love for Thee, receive us at last into Thy everlasting dwelling in heaven.

The Eucharist, a Mystery of Faith

When he was about to die, St. Thomas Aquinas, the famous Doctor of the Church, composed a hymn of faith and love to the holy Eucharist. His heart and intellect both revealed to him the hidden God. *In cruce latebat sola Deitas, At hic latet simul et humanitas.*

You wonder, perhaps, how the divine Word assumed our humanity and how, having assumed it, He is present in the Eucharist. When the angel spoke, our Lady believed: *Beata, quia*

credidisti. Let us believe in our turn, *oportet accedentem ad Deum credere quia est.* This is the mystery of faith. God is so great and our intelligence so limited! Therefore an act of faith—triumph of faith—two points to consider.

I. **Act of faith.** An act of faith is an act of fidelity towards God. He requires of us faith or fidelity. The faithful are Christians who have faith in Him.

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves to feed the bodies of 5000 people amazed the disciples and Jews. Then our Lord promised the divine bread of the Eucharist as food of their souls. He intended to keep that promise at the Last Supper, but for the moment the divine bread simply existed: *Caro mea est;* it was not yet in the state of a gift to men, but belonged only to Himself. He spoke of *my* flesh, *my* blood. The Real Presence is plainly indicated in this passage. Our Lord's body, both then and on the cross, was a real body. At the Last Supper He said: "This *is* my body," transforming altogether the substance of the bread. St. Bernard remarks: "You believe your own eyes; believe the ears that heard the words of Jesus Christ." Our Lord could not be deceived, nor can He deceive us. *God is true.* Christ had said: "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man. . . . He that eateth . . ." He had just before given the multitude miraculous food, which they had really eaten. He was still speaking of real eating. The loaves that He had multiplied were true bread, produced by His word. The Eucharistic bread is therefore His true Body, produced by His word. Human beings put faith in learned men; so believe God, when He speaks about the things of God. Our Lady believed Gabriel when he announced that the divine Word was about to become man. Her only question was concerning the manner in which this would take place, and the angel's answer was that to God all things were possible. She, the instrument of the Incarnation, was satisfied with this reply, and shall we attempt to explain this second mystery, in which the Word of God lowers Himself in the Eucharist? No, let us accept it as a mystery of faith.

The substance of the bread that I eat becomes my body. Could not Christ accomplish in an instant what we do in course of time? There was more difference between the sub-

stances of the water and of the wine at Cana—between that of the water and that of the blood, in the Mosaic law—between that of the rod and that of the serpent in the hands of Moses.

Our heavenly Father gave all power into the hands of His Son (John xiii. 3). If Christ had not kept His promise, how could He have said on Calvary: "All is consummated"? In every age of the Church's history the same belief has been held. That some have denied it, does not destroy the truth. In 1572 St. John of Gorcum, a Dominican, and nineteen other persons with him were put to death by the Protestants on account of their faith in the Eucharist. May our faith be as strong as that of these martyrs!

II. **Triumph of faith.** This mystery of faith, being wholly divine, triumphs over what is human in us, viz., our sight, our understanding and our private judgment. In spite of the testimony of the ten, Thomas said: "Except I shall see . . . I will not believe." We have the testimony of Christ Himself: *Ego sum . . . Corpus meum sanguis meus, . . . Qui manducat me* . . . The testimony of the Church in every age is the same.

If you desire to see, do so with the eyes of faith. St. Augustine defines faith as belief in what one does not see. St. Paul says: *Fides est argumentum non apparentium,* and tells us that faith cometh by hearing. Therefore listen to Christ's words. It is useless to insist upon seeing, because, as in the Cenacle, we are required to hear. The eye of man cannot fathom human knowledge, far less can it fathom the mysteries of God.

The Jews did not ask how bread could become our Lord's body, but how He could give His flesh to be eaten. They received no answer. St. Cyril remarks: "Notice that Christ did not say 'take and enquire,' but 'take and eat.'"

Let us be content not to ask "how," but simply accept the reason why. At Cana it did not matter how the water was changed into wine, provided that wine was supplied. Long before God had said *Fiat lux;* no one can tell how light was made, and yet we benefit by it. How did the blood preserve the firstborn of the Israelites in Egypt? What does it matter? They were preserved by it, and this ought to satisfy us.

Pride exalts us above others in our own opinion, but not in

reality. Human self-assertion is always hateful. It is quite impossible for each individual to be the most intelligent person in the world. Both the Gospels and history show that our Lord did more than anyone else, both by His own actions and through the Church that He established. Hence we acknowledge His superiority. It is no humiliation for us to confess that He can do more than we. We are like children and He is our Master.

The proud, whether heretics or godless men, and those who in their ignorance think much of themselves, say that even if all others believe, they will refuse to do so. They are condemned by every reasonable being. The wisest man in the world is nothing in God's sight. Private judgment should humble itself and disappear. Comparatively few raise any objection to the Gospel narrative; the weight of evidence is all in its favor; martyrs, doctors, councils, the Church uphold it. What we call faith is simply reason in God. Little children, unable to understand our reasons, have faith in us. We ourselves have faith in the knowledge of great scholars and inventors with regard to things that seem to them quite natural. If then, we rise a step higher, and consider God, there is nothing extraordinary in Him in His own sight. Hence faith dominates private judgment in this world. In heaven there will be no more faith, but sight. "We see now . . . in a dark manner, but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). By the light of God's word, let us believe. Because we have faith, we are called "the faithful." God's word is far greater than our sight, understanding and judgment.

HOLY THURSDAY

The Church and the Eucharist

"Take ye and eat; this is my Body."—1 Cor. xi. 24.

In a few hours we shall be thinking of our Lord's Passion and Crucifixion. The apostles slept, but we must be awake and pray. We have to recall to-day the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The end was now approaching. (The scene at the

Last Supper.) Two points: the glory of the Eucharist, which Christ entrusted to the Church; the glory of the Church, which possesses the Eucharist.

I. **Glory of the Eucharist** entrusted to the Church. The Word of God was laid in a manger, accepted pain and humiliation, preached to the people of Judea and Galilee, cured the sick, raised the dead, consoled the afflicted and died on Calvary. All the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled. It was not enough that He should live in the future only by the memory of His works; He desired to live Himself.

The Last Supper in the Cenacle. The Paschal lamb of the Mosaic law, the unleavened bread, the chalice of Melchisedech. The divine Word, hidden under the form of man, was about to conceal His humanity. That same night He was to visit Gethsemani and the Garden of Olives; then the Praetorium and on the next day Calvary. But in 70 A. D. Jerusalem was ruined; thenceforth there was no Jewish Temple, and over the whole world men began to build churches where our Saviour was to dwell in His Eucharistic presence.

The Jews murdered their Messias, and they were followed by Christians who worshipped Him. There was another Israel, another synagogue, other pontiffs and levites, another Temple. There are always men like Judas, Pilate and the executioners, who insult our divine Lord, but when their turn comes, they die. We worship Jesus, truly, really and substantially present in the Eucharist.

II. **Glory of the Church.** Real Presence of her divine Founder. This is the chief difference between true Christianity and false religions, which possess some of the doctrines and sacraments of the true Church, and honor the Name of Jesus. We read our Lord's discourses in the Gospel, as others read the works of Mahomet, Buddha and Confucius, but He dwells on our altars as He dwelt at Nazareth, Bethany and in Judea; there we can visit Him and pray to Him.

Our union with Him is perfect. He communicates to us His graces, words, doctrine and sacraments. The manger received Him, and later on the cross. Why should not our hearts receive Him? "Take ye and eat." Holy Communion

has four chief effects upon us—it unites us with Christ—increases the life of grace within us—gives us mastery over our passions—is a pledge of our glorious resurrection.

It is an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ, the Word Incarnate, lived here below, and had to die as our Redeemer. The men of His own country had seen and heard Him, but His religion was to last until the end of the world; hence He wished to abide in our midst, but with His humanity veiled from our eyes. He lives in the tabernacle. What does it behoove us to do? Three things.

a. To respect and venerate the apostles in the Cenacle, whose successors form the hierarchy of the Church.

b. To show zeal for God's house, the material church, the new cenacle, which contains the tabernacle, and is the place where we receive the sacraments.

c. To love Holy Communion, when the Holy Eucharist is given to us and Jesus comes to our hearts. Easter Communion —living faith—ardent desire—resolutions—and a truly Christian way of life.

Peroration. Our Lord was in the Cenacle when Judas was planning His betrayal. A few hours later He would be dragged from one tribunal to another, crucified and buried. But fear not! The alleluia of the Resurrection will not fail to follow.

CORPUS CHRISTI

"Taking bread, He gave thanks and brake, and gave to them, saying: This is my body."—LUKE xxii. 19.

Almighty God came down to the manger, died upon the cross, and became in the Cenacle our living bread. God is with us at Christmas, Easter and the Ascension, but to-day, Corpus Christi, He seems especially good and lovable. Let us enter into the spirit of the Church. Of all the sacraments, the Eucharist most demands our reverence because of what it contains; it demands our love, because of what it represents, and it is the most to be desired, because of what it bestows.

I. It demands our reverence. Through the words of con-

secration, first pronounced by Christ and perpetuated in the Church, the Eucharist contains our Saviour and Redeemer. He said: "This is my Body which is given for you"—"This is . . . my Blood, which shall be shed for you." He was present at Bethlehem, on Calvary, in the Cenacle, and He is present in the Eucharist. The eye of faith cannot be deceived—He is there!

It contains our Creator. God's works claimed His power. He lived as Man in Palestine, but His miracles proved His divinity, and in the Cenacle He displayed the same power. It contains our Mediator. Christ shares the nature both of heaven and earth, for in one Person He possesses both a divine and human nature. St. Paul says: "God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (1 Cor. v. 19). He transforms our life. O let us by our love show our readiness to fall in with His designs!

II. **It demands our love.** What does the Eucharist represent? Our divine Lord Himself. It is a *real* representation. On the altar as on the cross Christ consists of body and blood, united to the Word, but (*mysterium fidei*) mystically dead, under the species of bread and wine. He is lifted up, apparently broken, buried in the tabernacle and in the hearts of men, then He rises again in renewed holiness of life. *Vivit vero in me Christus.* It is a *glorious representation.* He died on Calvary at the hands of His executioners; He dies on our altars through a religious action. The victim becomes the offering, and worship takes the place of murder. The whole world offers this sacrifice: "In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation" (Mal. i. 11). It is a *perpetual* representation. Our Lord died on Calvary *once.* He is offered on our altars continually. What more could He have done?

III. **It is most to be desired.** The prophet exclaims: "What is the good thing of Him and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins." (Zach. ix. 17). We have here a mention of bread and wine, the matter of the Holy Eucharist. It is substantial food. "I am the bread of life . . . the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world . . . I will raise him up in the last day . . . he

that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John vi.). It unites us intimately with God: "He that eateth my flesh . . . abideth in me and I in him . . . he shall live by me" (John vi. 57, 58). This is the meaning of the word "communion."

The Eucharist is a remedy for sin. It is God's perfect gift. From the time of its institution our Redemptor has supplied us with strength to resist sin, and on Calvary He obtained for us remission of all our sins. He heals our wounds, cleanses our souls, and makés us strong.

Peroration. How grand and magnificent is this festival, and how great should be our devotion in church and during the procession!

Corpus Christi Procession

"David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting and with sound of trumpet."—2 Kings vi. 15.

This is the Ark of the new Covenant, the abode of God Himself. We are celebrating the triumph of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and the Church raises her songs of joy. It is a triumph that is glorious, salutary and reasonable.

I. **A glorious triumph.** There are two kinds of triumph. 1. At Holy Communion our Lord enters into a soul, so that it conquers sin, remains in the state of grace, and advances towards heaven. This is an inward triumph. But a public triumph was also needed by our Saviour. Crowds have followed him in Judea. This is our Lord and the monstrance. Here we have the priesthood and revealed truth. White dresses, banners, fragrant flowers. The Church does all that she can to do honor to her Master. On Palm Sunday the Jews cried *Hosanna,* and a few days later *Crucifigatur.* Impious men when in power have forbiddden processions to be held, and the police have stopped them.

II. **A reasonable triumph,** for four special causes.

1. *We acknowledge the gift of Christ in the Eucharist.* "Come and behold ye the works of the Lord, what wonders He hath done upon earth" (Ps. 45, 9).

2. *Christ bestows His divine blessings.* When He went about

in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, He wrought miracles to reward the faith displayed by the sick, palsied, etc. At Lourdes miraculous cures are effected as the Blessed Sacrament passes by.

3. *Unbelievers are put to confusion.* They may be touched by the faith of the Church, which gives them ground for reflection and points out the way of truth. Then they will ask: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

4. *The faith of Catholics is strengthened and increased.* Faith is often sluggish, or weak, or wavering. We live so far from our Lord's country; we cannot see Him with our eyes, but to-day He is with us, truly, really, substantially. The saints understood this fact, and miracles prove it.

III. **A salutary triumph.** We ought to feel:

1. *Reverence.* God's majesty is everywhere the same; one who is truly great is so in secret as well as in public, but man is a creature of sense, to which appeal outward ceremonies and solemnities, both in civil and religious matters. As long as Thomas was with his companions, he remained incredulous, but when Jesus appeared, he fell on his knees. Therefore it is well that our Lord should come forth from the church, that we may show Him reverence.

2. *Devotion.* We are devoted to those whom we esteem highly and love. Devotion shows itself in tender affection, gratitude and confidence. We consist of body and soul, so we need external, public worship as well as private, inward respect.

3. *Consolation.* St. Mary Magdalene stood by the cross on Calvary; she sought her Lord in the sepulchre—her grief was profound. When He appeared, her joy was so intense that she flung herself at His feet, and He touched her forehead. In the same way Jesus comes to us; it is really our Lord who passes by.

Peroration. O dear Saviour, Thou didst call all to come to Thee; behold us here present; help us to serve and love Thee better. Amen.

The Eucharist, our Glory and our Strength

"Thou, O Lord, art among us, and Thy name is called by us; forsake us not."—Jer. xiv. 9.

God comes to us to raise us to Himself; He lives in us, as St. Paul says. This is an honor to us; but let us be careful; the apostles received Holy Communion in the Cenacle, and yet they forsook their Master at Gethsemani.

Two points: The Eucharist, our glory and our strength.

1. **Our glory.** Glory may be defined as honor paid to some one on account of his talents, merit or virtue. These three things are a legitimate reason for fame. Glory, according to human ideas. People are ambitious and proud, and desire honors that they may be renowned and respected. Those who boast of victories in battle, of having ruined a country, or of having written books to mislead the intellect of man, will sooner or later be laid in the grave. Think of Cyrus, Alexander, Caesar—where are their souls in God's sight? Of course some men are honorable, admired by their fellow citizens, rewarded by their country. We all respect the decorations that they wear on their breast, but after all, these are earthly things, and God asks for our souls!

Glory, according to God's idea, comes from heaven, conveyed by angels. God is the starting-point, the origin, the inspiration, and God is the aim and goal. Between these two points all is still God. Be humble; He giveth grace to the humble. If you practice virtue, you will rise higher. "They shall go from virtue to virtue" (Ps. 83, 8). Earth did not possess true glory; heaven bestowed it on the manger; our Lord confers it on the tabernacle. Glory, according to Jesus Christ. God still continued to lower Himself. At the age of twelve He listened to the doctors in the Temple; at thirty He humbled Himself before John the Baptist; for three years He preached a divine doctrine, confirmed by startling miracles; at the close of a life of self-denial, He died a shameful death. Self-abasement could go no further, and yet the cross was finally to reign supreme. His love was not satisfied;

"Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end." When about to die, He wished to remain with us; although He was to ascend to heaven, He desired to abide in our midst, and so He concealed His humanity in its turn. He is there on the altar—come to Him. He sacrifices Himself there—come and be present at the daily renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary. He is our food there. This is true glory that casts its reflection even to all eternity.

II. **Our strength.** At the present day people disdain whatever is weak, humble, insignificant; but that does not matter, for many lowly saints have found admission to heaven. Like them, let us be brave and strong in our resistance to the devil and his instruments. Have recourse to Holy Communion in time of suffering. We all suffer, in body, heart or soul. How many are our trials! The sum total of our sufferings exceeds that of our joys. We are all sinners, and ought to humble ourselves with Jesus on the cross and in the tabernacle. The righteous require further sanctification and their virtues are rendered more solid by means of Holy Communion. In His agony in the garden our Lord exclaimed: *Tristis est anima mea,* and at once an angel brought Him the chalice; let us follow His example, and also take the chalice of Holy Communion. Our passions are another form of suffering. They are a rebellion in our character, will and heart. Good and evil stand in antagonism to one another. Under the influence of anger Alexander killed Clitus, a true friend. This inward fire will be extinguished by the dew of divine grace. Our exhausted strength will be renewed by the bread of the strong. The prophet Elias was on the point of dying from fatigue when the angel bade him arise and eat. Do not let yourselves sink under the burden of discouragement and passion. Come to Holy Communion. Sacrifice is yet another kind of suffering, holy in its nature (*sacrum facere*) and meritorious in God's sight. The apostles left everything, and, with their Master's Eucharistic words upon their lips and love of Him in their hearts, they set about the work of converting the world. They underwent torture and martyrdom, and since their time eighteen millions of Christians have died for their faith. They sacrificed everything; they received the Viaticum in order

to be brave at the hour of their martyrdom, and so they defied the tyrants, who were the forerunners of our modern persecutors. One day the holy Curé d'Ars related how a high official, after a fervent Communion went to join Père Lacordaire. Go elsewhere; ask the Trappists and Carthusians how many happy people of this age have entered religion to save their souls. It is a great virtue to remain in the friendship of God. B. Imelda was not twelve years old when her miraculous first Communion opened heaven to her. St. Cecilia, St. Agnes and St. Catharine were all young, so were St. John Berchmans, St. Stanislaus Kostka, St. Aloysius of Gonzaga. All of these, whilst still on earth, had their hearts in heaven. So let us have courage and confidence in God under all possible circumstances.

Peroration. Guard jealously the sacred treasure bestowed on you; do not forget this solemnity. Your hearts should be tabernacles where Christ abides, altars on which your imperfections are sacrificed to Him; your whole life should be, as it were, a monstrance where He is revealed, and your actions golden rays emanating from the Sun of Justice, and destined to shed a glorious light upon you in heaven.

The Right Dispositions for Holy Communion

"The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God."—1 Paral. xxix. 1.

In Holy Communion God comes to visit us. Two things need explanation—the doctrinal and the moral instruction.

I. **Doctrinal instruction.** Right disposition of body and of soul.

1. *Of body.* Parable in the gospel, Matt. xxii. 2-14. The invited guests did not come to the feast, so servants were sent out into the highways to call others to the marriage—many came with joy, only one man had not on a wedding-garment. It was not enough that he was present—he was bound hand and foot and cast out. God searches the conscience, and sees more than the outside of a man.

2. *Of the soul.* Our everyday garment is stained with imperfections, disobedience and sin; our festival robe is the state

of grace. Have your confessions been such as they ought to be? It is reasonable to confess our sins, and we cannot deceive God, even if we wish to deceive the priest. Besides making a good confession, we ought to be instructed in the principal mysteries of our faith. Go over the catechism; listen to sermons; read good books. Moreover, we must believe firmly that we are about to receive Jesus Christ. His statement is formal. Communion could be of no advantage to us, if faith and love were wanting on our part. Our bodily senses—sight, taste—are not everything. God's testimony is superior to them, and what is in question is supernatural and divine. We must approach Holy Communion with confidence, reverence and love. Confidence—for He is merciful there; reverence, for He is all-powerful; love, for He there bestows upon us graces for this life, and is a pledge of our future resurrection.

II. **Moral instruction.** The following three practices will help you to preserve all these things in your hearts.

1. *Purity of soul.* Formerly the deacon at Mass used to say: *Sancta sanctis.* St. John Chrysostom explained that the spirit of piety must accompany absolution of sin. Hence you should hate mortal sin, avoid venial sin, be faithful to prayer and good works.

2. *Sincere humility.* In Proverbs xxiii. 1, Solomon says: "When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince, consider diligently what is set before thy face." St. Augustine, commenting on this passage, writes: "What is this meat offered by the divine Prince?" It is the Eucharist. How ought you to approach it? With humility? At Mass the priest says: *Domine, non sum dignus.*

3. *True love of God.* In the Eucharist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul after Thee, O God" (Ps. 41, 1). But we must love God always, because He is our providence, judge and reward in heaven. St. Catharine of Siena used to pray: "O Jesus, delay not, come to my heart."

Holy Communion

"Was not our heart burning within us."—Luke xxiv. 32.

Story of the disciples at Emmaus. Three thoughts. Preparation for Communion, Misery of a bad Communion, Happiness of a fervent Communion.

I. **Preparation.** Examination of conscience, act of contrition, confession of sins committed.

1. *Examination of conscience.* "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Is. xxxviii. 15). Examine yourselves, before God examines you on the day of judgment. St. Paul says: "Let a man prove himself , and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. xi. 28). Good and bad cannot be equally welcome to our Lord. Of Judas He said: "Better were it for that man that he had not been born." Examine yourselves: St. John Chrysostom remarks that many Christians discuss the actions of others, whereas they ought first to criticize their own deeds. St. Isidore calls this ignorance "the mother and nurse of sin."

How can this examination be made? Consider whether your heart is inclined to thoughts of anger and desire of vengeance; whether your tongue delights in lies and calumny; your eyes are the window of your soul; how many distractions come to us through them! Look at your hands—what have you done with them? Whither have your feet carried or failed to carry you?

Thus you can judge yourselves, that God may forgive.

2. *Contrition.* Sorrow for sins, grief of heart, desire to be sorry and to cancel them. St. Ambrose says: "With what deep contrition of heart, accompanied by tears, ought we to approach the divine mystery of Thy Eucharist, O God! There our human insignificance is united with Thy divine majesty."

True Contrition has four characteristics. It is interior, God searches the depths of our hearts. It is universal, every single sin committed makes us unworthy. It is supreme, since to have offended God is the worst of all evils. It is supernatural, as it requires at least a little love of God.

It is always true that sin is hateful in God's sight, defiles our souls, is a genuine evil, and makes us unworthy to possess God in the Eucharist in this life, or in heaven in the life to come.

3. *Confession* must be humble, sincere, complete. It is useless to say: "I confess my sins to God in the secrecy of my own conscience," for that is equivalent merely to an acknowledgment that our sins do not escape His eye. We must perform a definite act that He prescribes, and go to the Sacrament of Penance. Let no one urge that an act of perfect contrition suffices; it is difficult to be sure that one's contrition is perfect, and imperfect contrition removes sin only in conjunction with absolution.

II. **Misery of a bad Communion.** Our Lord was betrayed by Judas, insulted in the Praetorium, crucified on Calvary. He suffers the same outrages now in the Eucharist. Would you wish to aggravate them?

To offend God is a most serious matter; a bad communicant profanes Him, whereas it is a fundamental principle that we owe respect to God and holy things. A bad communicant displays audacity, for he attacks Christ, who is there giving us His love, and will hereafter be our Judge. He is a traitor like Judas, who, after receiving Holy Communion with the other apostles, delivered our Lord up by means of a kiss, and, when he regretted, hanged himself. Bad Catholics persist in their wickedness and are not converted. A bad communicant is a hypocrite; Judas asked: "Is it I?" His aim was to get money; are you afraid to confess sins of which you are ashamed?

A bad Communion ruins the sinner in four ways. (a) He is guilty of our Lord's Body and Blood, and this for three reasons, as St. Paul says: he profanes them, treats them unworthily, and despises them, being unwilling to discern them. (b) He eats and drinks condemnation to himself. Christ said of Judas: "Woe to him by whom I am betrayed." (c) He is forsaken by God. After his Communion, Judas had the devil in his heart, and went out to seek those who wished to seize Jesus. (d) He is fatally indifferent to the welfare and salvation of his soul, and goes on committing one sin after another. Thus a bad Communion may make a man capable of worse sins than those of which he has previously been guilty.

III. **Happiness of a fervent Communion.** Can you say truth-

fully: "Was not our heart burning within us?" Let us see the reason, necessity and advantages of receiving Holy Communion.

I. *The reason.* Whom do you receive? God under the Eucharistic veil, God infinite in His majesty, who displays the perfection of His mercy in the Eucharist. God infinite in His goodness—*In finem dilexit eos.* Goodness could go no further; He has our interests so much at heart. God infinite in holiness, who bids us be holy as He is holy.

2. *The necessity.* If you are fervent, your duties will be better performed. A Christian should not be content with mediocrity. Your merits will increase; no one ever knows whether, in God's sight, he be worthy of love or hatred. Little virtues will find support and multiply, and venial sins will be overcome.

3. *The advantages.* A good, fervent communicant finds true happiness in prayer and all connected with it. We require our daily, supersubstantial bread. The sacraments, Sunday observance, strict compliance with God's commandments.

A fervent communicant finds happiness in pain and suffering. The angel Raphael said to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. xii. 13). This happiness remains even until the last sickness and agony. St. Lawrence on his gridiron was able to make fun of his executioners. The martyrs surrendered their lives to their persecutors, but saved their souls. Holy Viaticum, the last Communion, opens the gate of heaven. The Holy Eucharist contains all that we need throughout our earthly existence, and will be our support until we reach the glory of eternity.

FREQUENT COMMUNION

God sends in abundance the "daily bread" we all pray for; but men, through greed, idleness or ignorance, hinder its fair distribution.

So with "the Bread of Life," abundant and open to all. Men's own fault if they perish with hunger. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" All invited to the banquet. Too many send

in an excuse. Let us consider the invitation to frequent Communion and the excuses. We are urgently invited hereto:

I. By our Lord.

II. By the Church.

III. By our own needs.

1. **What is meant by frequent Communion.** Though not expressly yet implicitly, our Lord invites to frequent Communion, by choosing food as the vehicle of the gift of His Body and Blood. Food must be taken regularly and frequently, to keep up life and health. Incarnation, perpetual union with our humanity; Communion. Such likewise with the individual, but to be often renewed: "Vine and branches" need constant influx of sap. His promise of Eucharist, a discourse on frequent Communion. Manna taken daily—so also should be the manna of New Law.

2. **Mind of Master on this point, echoed by Church.** Easter Communion as fulfilment of precept, a threat of spiritual death by famine. Frequent, even daily Communion her desire and ideal. Hindrances thereto, recently removed: Sole essential dispositions, state of grace and right intention. This is restoration of early usage and discipline. Mass and Communion, one banquet. Primitive Christians, Catechumens; Fathers of Church, etc.

3. **We need frequent Communion,** because in need of the frequent and daily grace it imparts. As a help in the perpetual war we wage against evil. To correct our daily faults. To advance in the love of God and our neighbor.

4. **The excuses** people make for neglecting Holy Communion.

(a) Recapitulation of motives for frequent Communion founded in desire of Christ, the Church and our own crying needs. All excuses against these strong motives weak and puerile.

(b) Real motives, however, not always those alleged. If attached to sin, then it is Confession we need before Communion. For invitation to frequent Communion does not dispense with devout and earnest preparation.

(c) Purpose of frequent Communion to aid in acquiring

holiness of life not a privilege reserved to holiness already acquired. Possible and actual abuse of frequent Communion no argument against its use. More danger arising from scrutiny of "this gift of God" than of our crying need of it.

(d) Dispositions for frequent Communion now very simple. Does not necessarily involve frequent Confession.

(e) Personal unworthiness and consequent fear of sacrilege, if carried to logical issue, would exclude angels, saints, and our Lady even. Form under which Communion given and Christ's invitation backed by Church, and consciousness of our needs, a sufficient answer. Frequent communicants worthiest receivers. In this divine art, as in others, practice makes perfect.

(f) Reverence to sacrament and tepidity. True and false notions of reverence. Wrong attitude towards the gifts of God. Cannot get away from God's presence anyhow. Why, then, fear His Humanity more than His Divinity? As Man, is brother and companion. Easy terms on which gift offered.

(g) Want of time and opportunity. If real and honest, then spiritual Communion will supply, as love and sorrow the want of baptism. But, is this motive always honest? Busiest people in the world frequent communicants. "Where there's a will there's a way," and time too.

Alternative Plan

Frequent Communion

1. **Our Saviour's Wish.** Christ compared the Holy Eucharist with the manna given to the Jews in the wilderness, because the manna was the daily food of the Israelites and the Holy Eucharist is intended to be the daily food of the Christians. The early Christians perfectly understood this and communicated daily (Acts ii. 46 and ii. 42). Gradually the ardent zeal for the Blessed Sacrament disappeared and people began to communicate less frequently. Origen, who died in 251 A.D., addressed careless communicants in the following words: "You tell me that you come to church only on feast days, are

not the other days festivals too? Are they not also days belonging to the Lord? Among the Jews it is the practice to observe only a few days as festivals, but Christians receive the flesh of the Incarnate Word of God every day" (*In Genes. Hom.* 10, 3). Finally, however, the Church was obliged to command that Christians *must* receive the Holy Eucharist at least once a year, not because this is considered sufficient but because the laxity of the Christians made it necessary to command this as the absolute minimum.

2. **A source of great graces.** "He that eateth my flesh abideth in me and I in Him" (John v. 57). "As the living Father had sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me" (John v. 58). He who communicates often enters into closer union with God, and by strengthening the moral virtues regulates his whole attitude towards God, his neighbor and himself, whilst by rendering the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost more abundant he makes his understanding and will more accessible to the inspirations and prompting of the same Spirit.

3. **Various excuses.** I am not worthy! That is true, neither is the greatest saint really worthy, being human. All that is necessary is that we are free from the guilt of mortal sin, so that if we have grievous sins on our conscience we must prepare ourselves by a good confession. Another excuse is, I have no time. We are very punctilious in making time for our daily meals to nourish our body, and this excuse is only a sad admission that we place the body over the soul. By frequent Communion we strengthen our faith, give a good example, and prepare ourselves for a good and saintly death.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

(*Octave of Corpus Christi*)

The Eucharist is consecrated at holy Mass. On this octave day let us consider two effects of the Sacrifice of the Mass in connection with that of the cross. (1) It reproduces all its

virtues in order to renew the honor paid to God. (2) It renews all its merits, in order to apply to us their fruits.

I. **It reproduces the virtues of the Sacrifice of the Cross.** Three special points. (1) Christ there unites visible ministers to Himself. Priests, in virtue of their ordination, share His priesthood. In the Cenacle He consecrated the apostles; on Calvary He alone offered the sacrifice, but on the altar He makes use of their ministry. "Do this for a commemoration of me." Thus He acts as priest for ever. The faithful present at Mass, offer with the priest and also consume the consecrated Hosts. Confiteor, epistle, gospel, credo . . . priest and people ought to unite and pray, listen, adore. (2) Jesus Christ there consecrates living altars for Himself. The priest's hands are consecrated so that He may touch the Host; he takes and repeats the words of Christ, and receives the Host. This Communion is essential to the holy sacrifice. It has always been a universal custom for the faithful to assist at Mass, and formerly they communicated daily after the priest. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved for them. (3) Christ there unites living victims to Himself. (a) The Church triumphant. The saints in heaven, who adore Him, remember how they derived sanctification from Holy Mass, and pray for and with us. (b) The Church suffering. The souls in purgatory benefit by Holy Mass. (c) The Church militant. Here below we have great need of God, and the Mass is the most indispensable ceremony, at which we pray in sorrow, in joy, and in all the circumstances of life.

II. **It renews the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross.** They are: (a) Sacrifice of propitiation—mercy to Catholics, whilst heretics fall from one error to another. (b) Thank-offering—it glorifies Christ for our redemption, and gives more perfect honor to God than any other sacrifice. (c) Sacrifice of impetration or petition—prayers and desires of the Church, zeal and piety of good Catholics.

Those who are indifferent say that they are too busy to go to Mass, but this is a mere excuse; it is our chief duty to serve God, and many busier people never miss Mass. They assert that they could not pray properly at Mass, but it is the duty

of all kinds of Christians to hear Mass on Sunday, and it may be that they need it more than others. They are lacking in the spirit of Christianity, which perceives that Calvary and the tabernacle are the bases of religion. Let us put fresh life into our faith, make amends for past neglect, and form a firm resolution to do better in future.

SERMONS ON THE SACRED HEART

The Sacred Heart

"Come to me, all you that labour . . . and I will refresh you."—Matt. xi. 28.

Two thoughts. (1) Devotion to the Sacred Heart, a remedy for souls. (2) Mission of the Sacred Heart, a support of the Church and of souls.

I. **Devotion to the Sacred Heart.** To every vice grace opposes a virtue; for every ill of the family or the individual God supplies a powerful and efficacious remedy. Whence proceed our vices and ills? from our mind, heart and will.

1. Hence this devotion is a remedy for intellectual errors. Mental blindness must be cured by divine light: "I am the light of the world." In the Sacred Heart, which loves us so dearly, are the true sources of light and learning. Let us not hesitate nor remain in darkness, but go to Him who will refresh us. He alone can show us the emptiness of the world, the harmful errors originating in human wisdom. Earth is a land of exile; heaven is the home of souls and divine glory.

2. It is a remedy for faintheartedness. We are fashioned of clay and prone to sin, and our hearts seem to breathe in air that is foul and vitiated. But the Heart of God is a sanctuary of purity, the clear, lifegiving atmosphere of the eternal hills. Let us gain the heights of virtue, sacrifice all thoughts that would make us fall, and ascend to those serene regions inhabited by pure and virgin souls. There we shall triumph over the frailties of this evil world, destruction and ruin. Christ will be our true life. "I am the life."

3. It is a remedy against the weakness of our will. We like to be independent and only obey when it suits us. We are lukewarm in our pursuit of what is good. From the Sacred Heart we shall learn God's will. Under His guidance, our disorderly will grows calm, and endures without murmuring all kinds of annoyance and suffering. With the Heart of Jesus, we find the way of well-doing, the peace promised to men of good will, the path leading to perfection. "I am the way."

II. **Mission of the Sacred Heart.** The mission of Christ and His Church affects men not only as individuals, but also collectively. The Sacred Heart exercises a necessarily beneficial influence in the Church, sustaining her and the souls belonging to her. It is

1. *A pilot.* The world is like the ocean, never at rest, disturbed by storms of human passion. Days and months pass, but there is seldom calm weather; we are surrounded by dangers, and our ship is very fragile. Even the bark of the Church is tempest-tossed. . . . Our Lord is not always asleep. Therefore let us take courage. Woe to us if we lean overboard and keep our eyes fixed on the depths of the sea—a gust of passion and we shall fall and be swallowed up—but the bark of the Church continues its course and will reach harbor safely.

2. *A beacon.* Jesus Christ, the light of the world, is truth and holiness. Look up to Him and walk in the path that He illumines. A beacon sheds light, indicates hidden dangers, reefs and sand-banks, where ships might be wrecked. The Sacred Heart is a source of light guiding us in our intellectual darkness. Without it, we should run upon the rocks, and the piratical emissaries of Satan would attack us.

3. *A haven.* A haven is a refuge for ships, where they are sheltered from storms and hostile vessels. It is the place where they put in, after the fatigues of a voyage and where repairs are done.

For us the Sacred Heart is a safe refuge from our spiritual enemies . . . there we find rest and peace, there we can recruit our exhausted strength. . . . Let us go to the Heart of Jesus; its divine wound is ever open to give us shelter. A harbor is a

hollow cut out of the coast line, and in the same way the lance cut an opening in our Saviour's Heart.

Peroration. Let us go to Jesus; He will heal and refresh, sustain and comfort us.

The Sacred Heart

Object of the Devotion

"Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."—Ps. lxxii. 26.

The feast of the Sacred Heart follows close on Corpus Christi. The heart of God, the mercy of God. He came to us by way of the manger, the Cenacle and the cross. . . . In man the head directs, but frequently the heart decides.

Two points: The object of and the grounds for this devotion.

I. **The object of this devotion.** We honor the five Wounds, and also the Heart of our Lord. That Heart has ever been the seat and symbol of His love, the source of all His benefits, the sanctuary of all grace and virtue, the model of all sanctity. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus dates from the very beginning of Christianity. We read that He worked many miracles, because He was moved by compassion. In 1670 a special revelation was given to St. Margaret Mary, a nun of the Visitation Order at Paray-le-Monial: "Behold this heart that hath loved men so much." . . . (Refer briefly to the promises.) It is a Christian practice to invoke the Sacred Heart because it is the source of grace, is hurt by indifference, persecuted by blasphemy, injured by sacrilege. The cultus of the Sacred Heart differs (a) from that of the Blessed Sacrament, which is directed towards the person of Christ in the Eucharist; (b) from devotion to the Passion, which is centered upon the sufferings and death of Christ. But it was His Heart that inspired our Lord to institute the Eucharist and to die upon the cross, and so we may well honor this Heart.

II. **Grounds for this devotion.** Judas betrayed our Lord for money. We love this Heart because it is so worthy of love,

surpassing every human heart in the perfection of its human nature and its union with the divine Word. This Heart suggested all His works to our Saviour, and assures us of His mercy. It asks for our hearts: "My son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart" (Osee ii. 14).

We love the Sacred Heart because it is the source of consolation, holiness, light, purity and strength. The promises are glorious. Our Lord said: "I will shed all the riches of my Heart upon those who honour it."

II. FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

THE PURIFICATION

"After the days of her purification . . . were accomplished."—LUKE ii. 22.

This is a great and memorable anniversary, which sanctifies the churching of each Christian mother, just as the presentation of the holy Child consecrates little children to God. To-day we think of three persons: Jesus, Mary and Simeon.

1. **Jesus.** The presentation or offering of the divine Child in the Temple is the primary reason for our sacrifices.

1. It represents the offering made by every Christian. Ever since the Israelites left Egypt, each firstborn son had to be dedicated to God. Be comforted, Christian mothers, who are mourning the death of a child. . . . Jesus here represents us all.

2. It calls for the offering of every Christian. Jesus was redeemed in order to die later on upon the cross. He underwent a long martyrdom. Let us suffer with Him, and purify our own sufferings.

3. It sanctifies the offering of every Christian. Without Christ, we have no merit. With Him, we become living victims (Rom. ii.). Apart from Him, nothing is of any advantage for heaven—but with Him everything.

II. **Mary.** The sword of suffering. She sacrificed:

1. Her own glory. Though she was immaculate, not bound by the law, she submitted to it in all humility, and allowed herself to seem like other women. She sacrificed:

2. Her own heart. Simeon foretold for her a life of anguish. She also "for the joy that was set before her endured the cross." She sacrificed:

3. Her own Son. God asked a similar sacrifice of Abraham, Mary accomplished it. Moses permitted the redemption of the firstborn. Isaac was destined to live in happiness, Christ grew up to die on Calvary.

III. **Simeon.** An aged servant of God, led by the Spirit into the Temple. What was his joy on seeing the promised Messias! Yet he foretold that He was a sign which should be contradicted, and that a sword should pierce the heart of His holy Mother. For himself he said: *Nunc dimittis.* Thenceforth he waited for death. Sometimes God prolongs a life full of trials and weariness. Simeon was already preparing to depart, but longed to see the Messias. Do we look forward to our last hour and desire to receive holy Viaticum? He hoped to be thenceforth with God and his own ancestors. We are apt never to think about the future life.

Peroration. Christ is our light; let us treasure our blessed candles. Mary is your model, O Christian mothers, follow her example. Simeon is a model to us all; let us imitate him, and so we shall reach heaven.

Alternative Plan

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."—Matt. v. 17.

I. **The festival of the Purification.** The Jewish law required a woman to be purified after childbirth, as ever since the curse had been pronounced upon the human race, every birth was considered a defilement (Leviticus ii.). After the birth of a son, 40 days; after that of a daughter, 80. As a ransom rich people offered a lamb as a holocaust, and a turtledove as an expiatory sacrifice; the poor offered two doves or two turtledoves. Our Lady had incurred no legal defilement, but as she could not yet reveal the mystery of the Incarnation, she obeyed the law.

Presentation of Jesus. God required the firstborn son to be offered to Him, and so Mary offered the divine Child. Jesus offered Himself (Ps. 39 and Hebr. x.); Simeon and Anna came forward and prophesied. Christian mothers, what could be foretold of your children?

II. **The ceremonies.** Many people are present, and their presence is a proof of their Christian spirit. Mary and her divine Son also went to the Temple. Like Anna and Simeon, long to see God.

Blessed candles. Christ is our supernatural light; your faith, like the flame of the candle, ought to be directed towards God. The blessing given to-day is not given again during the year. Keep your candles and light them on great occasions.

The prayers in the Missal. Origin, significance, use and choice of wax. Incense; holy water.

Procession. Joseph and Mary went to the Temple. Jesus in Mary's arms already foreshadowed the cross. Simeon, Anna . . . made the stations. All, with levites and high priest, escorted Jesus. Begin with God, come back to God.

Peroration. Let us walk in the light of Christ, and follow the example of Mary and Simeon.

THE ANNUNCIATION

"And Mary said: Be it done to me according to thy word."—Luke i. 38.

The story of the Annunciation. Two special virtues that characterized our Lady, humility and purity.

I. **Humility.** "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Mary's humility surpassed that of all the saints.

Humility is the first condition necessary to God's manifestations (St. Augustine). *Ave, gratia plena;* and she possessed the source of grace—*Dominus tecum.*

Mary's humility was united with the highest merit. To the address "full of grace," she replied: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Although she was so highly exalted, she remained the humble *Ancilla Domini,* just as her divine Son afterwards emptied Himself of His glory. Let us then learn humility. It is a great lesson that without our Lady's humility, there would have been no divine motherhood, and consequently no Incarnation, no Redemption, no perfect religion, no easy salvation.

II. **Purity.** St. Bernard says that virginity was absolutely indispensable to the Incarnation. Who sent the angel? God,

who is eternal purity. Who was sent? An angel, the purity of heaven. For what purpose? That the divine Word might become incarnate for the remission of all our sins. To whom was the angel sent? To a pure virgin.

God's messenger was pure by nature; Mary was pure by choice and goodness. She was troubled by the mere sight of the angel; she valued her virginity so highly as to prefer it to divine motherhood. But the Holy Ghost, the spirit of eternal brightness, was to come upon her . . .

Peroration. The greatness of humility, the might of virginity. Let us abhor pride and wickedness, and ask our Lady and the angel to help us.

Faith and Humility

Two points: Mary, the model of perfect faith concerning the self-abasement of the Word of God; the model of profound humility concerning her own dignity.

I. **Perfect faith.** Based on the word of God—Is. vii, the Virgin Mother. The angel Gabriel, sent by God, proceeded gradually: grace, the Lord, her superiority to all other women. Then he added: "thou shalt conceive," and mentioned the name, greatness and dignity of the Son of the Most High, and the eternity of His reign.

Her faith was enlightened by God's own action. She knew the Old Testament and the Messianic prophecies, and consequently the announcement of our Lord's dignity did not astonish her. Her faith constituted her happiness, and she understood everything—one thing only seemed an obstacle—her virginity.

Her faith was submissive to God's power and authority. The angel answered her objection by pointing out that God is all-powerful, above the laws that He has made. The Holy Ghost would work the miracle, for nothing was impossible with God.

II. **Profound humility.** Our Lady showed her humility in her manner of listening to God's envoy. She knew that her divine Son would be great, but she knew also that Isaias had

foretold His Passion and death. She might have revealed the mystery that Gabriel had just made known to her, and gratitude towards God and charity towards those who awaited the Messias might have seemed to require this of her, but such a revelation would have redounded to her own glory, and so she was silent. She showed her humility in her reply to the angel. She did not allude to the dignity of the Son, whom she was to bear, but spoke only of her own virginity. Therefore she was truly humble. *Ecce ancilla* marks the climax of her greatness (St. Bede). Thus did she justify God's choice of her to be the Mother of His Son.

She showed humility in her answer to St. Elizabeth.

After receiving the angel's message, she went to visit her cousin, who greeted her with respect. Mary said nothing about herself, but glorified God, the sole source of all glory. Twice she referred to her own lowliness: *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae —exaltavit humiles.* The Messianic prophecies were fulfilled: *Recordatus . . . sicut locutus est ad patres nostros.*

Peroration. Two great virtues; faith in the utterances of God and His Church; humility in thought, since He alone is infinite Wisdom.

The Three Covenants

"The word was made flesh."—John i. 14.

The divine Word assumed our human nature. We have here three covenants: (1) With regard to Christ, who became God Incarnate; (2) with regard to Mary, who became Mother of God; (3) with regard to ourselves, who are made God's children.

I. **With regard to Christ.** Faith teaches us that the union of two natures in our Lord does not prevent His being one Person, the divine Word. Hence He renders human flesh the flesh of God. No matter what heretics may say, the true doctrine, which is of faith, is unaffected by the denial of His divinity, or of His humanity, or of the union of His two natures.

II. **With regard to Mary.** The Mother of Jesus is the Mother of God. We must not confuse the Mother of Jesus,

having in Himself the divine Word, with Mother of God, as far as reference is made to the Blessed Trinity. Nestorius refused to understand the distinction, and was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. The honors paid to Mary are based chiefly upon her divine motherhood. This is why she is our mediator.

III. **With regard to ourselves.** Christ possesses our human nature and therefore is akin to us, and we become children of God. He taught us to say: "Our Father." Hence we should obey God's commandments, and be zealous for His glory, that we may not prove ourselves unworthy of our high title.

THE VISITATION

"And Mary rising up . . . entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth."—LUKE i. 40.

Two points—the mystery of gratitude towards God, and that of charity towards Elizabeth.

I. **Gratitude towards God.** Two things underlie gratitude, (a) a sense of the favor received and of the honor due to the benefactor, and (b) a consciousness of our own unworthiness of the favor, and of our insignificance in comparison with the benefactor.

Mary possessed both. (a) You extol me, but I glorify God. (b) You call me Mother of God, but I class myself with the lowliest of His servants.

II. **Charity towards Elizabeth.** In 1 Cor. xiii. St. Paul enumerates the characteristics of charity, and says it is not envious, but is kind. So our Lady did not envy St. Elizabeth's happiness, but, forgetful of self, set out to share her joy. She showed her kindness by waiting upon her cousin for three months.

ALTERNATIVE PLAN

Three points. Our Lady's visit was praiseworthy in its cause, holy in its conversations, beneficial in its results.

I. **Praiseworthy in its cause.** Go through the Gospel nar-

rative, comment upon it, and apply to our visits the principles of duty, religion and charity.

II. **Holy in its conversations.** Detailed examination of the recorded words. Mary and her cousin were both filled with the Spirit of God, conscious of His greatness, kindled with His love and grateful for His benefits. Consequently their conversations were holy and edifying. What about our conversations, even with pious persons?

III. **Beneficial in its results.** Mary, being full of grace, carried benefits with her, by which all profited who came into contact with her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and took up the angel's last words: "Blessed art thou." The expected child was sanctified in his mother's womb. Zachary heard and learnt the new mercies of God.

Peroration. Lessons to be learnt and their application.

The Visitation

Three points. Mary went with *haste* to Zachary's house, *greeted* Elizabeth, filling her with the Holy Spirit, and *praised God,* whilst performing her work of charity.

I. **Our Lady went with haste,** lest, having once left Nazareth, she should remain long in a public place (St. Ambrose). What places do you frequent? With the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent (Ps. xvii. 26). St. Jerome writes: "Do you wish to know a man's character? Find out what sort of friends he has; he is what those are with whom he associates" (*Ad Nepot.*).

II. **She greeted Elizabeth,** filling her with the Holy Spirit. Not only did she visit her cousin, but she saluted her, and Elizabeth exclaimed: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" The answer is supplied by St. Bonaventure. She came because of her charity and humility. St. John the Baptist was sanctified . . . *Vox Mariae efficax fuit* (St. Greg. Thaum.). How different are the visits paid by worldly people!

III. **She praised God.** This was the day of the Magnificat. In reply to Elizabeth, Mary praised God and prophesied. She

remained three months, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28). Mary was younger than her cousin, and that was reason enough why she should humble herself to serve her.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation."—Is. lxi. 10.

Catholics, dedicated to the service of our Lady, have a great devotion to this feast. Every devotion, if it is to be wise and prudent, ought to be based on firm principles and be beneficial to us, and productive of good results.

The devotion of the brown scapular is based on perfectly sound principles and its results are most advantageous.

I. **Sound principles.** Three in number.

The devotion is of the holy origin. St. Simon Stock was a man of heroic virtue and wonderful works. He shunned the world, practiced great austerities, prayed continually, had a horror of the smallest faults and possessed angelic purity. He joined the Carmelite Order, then recently introduced into Europe, and in time became Superior. For three years he prayed with tears to our Lady, who at last appeared to him.

The devotion possesses magnificent prerogatives. It was given us by a saint, a religious Order and the Church itself, and has been recommended, upheld and enriched with indulgences. The Bulls of many Popes.

It is very widely spread, for it has never been censured, and is known all over the world. Its very simplicity enhances its value.

II. **Its results are advantageous.** Three chief results.

1. We participate in the merits of the Carmelite Order. The scapular is a little habit, like a miniature Carmelite scapular. It marks us as belonging to this Order. The Communion of Saints is an article of the Creed. All members of the confraternity are united, and those who are spiritually poor can draw on a vast store of merit. Hence many indulgences are attached to the scapular.

2. It denotes special consecration to our Lady. From the

time of Elias onwards there were hermits on Mount Carmel, and an altar to Mary was erected there at the very beginning of Christianity. Afterwards, being persecuted by the Saracens, the Carmelites sent their statue of our Lady to Rome. St. Louis offered it a refuge in the west. This statue was the origin of the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, the apparition to St. Simon Stock gave rise to the scapular.

3. Many miracles have been worked. Various miracles in the course of ages . . . preservation from falls on several occasions; deadly blows rendered harmless by the scapular.

It is most advantageous to belong to this Confraternity, as it ensures the protection of our Lady, and promotes piety and virtue.

The Scapular

"Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day."—Prov. xxxi. 25.

I. **Strength.** Devotion to Mary is often attacked or misunderstod. Members of the Confraternity of the brown scapular are peculiarly bound to defend her; this is a duty, a point of honor, imposed upon them by the scapular.

II. **Beauty**; the beauty of a faithful soul. Those who wear Mary's habit are bound to imitate her. To act in a way unworthy of a Christian would be a contradiction; to lay aside the scapular would show recklessness, culpable carelessness, and loss of religious feeling. We ought to overcome sinful habits that are contrary to our profession as followers of our Lady.

III. **She shall laugh in the latter day**—she will bless us at the hour of death. The scapular gives us a special claim upon our Lady's protection. History records graces of sanctification, protection and conversion; many extraordinary favors have been duly authenticated.

The Scapular

I. A precious pledge of salvation; for we belong to our Lady's spiritual family, and derive thence honors and

privileges. We are supported by the abundant merits and prayers of the other members of the Confraternity.

II. **Protection against all dangers**—unseen enemies, devils, temptations. Visible enemies, bad examples, scandals, accidents.

III. **Sanctification of the Christian life.** Devotion to Mary is a source of virtue, an assistance in doing good works, and a way to Christ. *Ad Jesum per Mariam.* It procures us many graces, spiritual privileges and indulgences.

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS

Portiuncula Indulgence

"This is the Lord's doing."—Ps. 117, 23.

St. Francis of Assisi prayed earnestly for a great favor to be bestowed on sinners. He obtained an indulgence from Christ, and induced the Pope to confirm and publish it. This was the origin of the Portiuncula or the Indulgence of our Lady of the Angels.

I. **It was granted by Christ** as a reward for St. Francis's zeal, as a token of His love for sinners and as a mark of His liberality towards the Church.

II. **It was confirmed by Christ,** whose testimony from heaven was given in answer to St. Francis. The Pope testified to it on earth, and it was supported by Bulls issued by Honorius III, Alexander IV, Boniface VIII, Clement V and others.

III. **It was promulgated by Christ,** through the ministry of angels in the church of the Portiuncula; by the bishops in the town of Assisi; by the working of grace in the hearts of the faithful.

Alternative Plan

Taking as text *Pater, dimitte illis,* three points might be chosen for discussion.

1. St. Francis prayed before **the throne of our heavenly**

Father on behalf of sinners, begging for them extraordinary graces of conversion with a zeal that was almost importunate.

2. He prayed before **the throne of Christ** on behalf of sinners, and obtained the indulgence that can be obtained to-day.

3. He prayed before **the papal throne,** and induced the Pope to promulgate the indulgence to the whole world.

So we see three tribunals and three thrones. . . .

THE ASSUMPTION

"A throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."—3 KINGS ii. 19.

For the glorious Virgin Mary this was the end of the humility of Nazareth, and of her inexpressible sorrow on Calvary—a throne, most exalted and resplendent, beside her divine Son in heaven.

Every human being must die, and Christ Himself desired to be laid in the tomb, so we cannot be surprised that His Mother also died and was buried. Her death is the first of the mysteries that we celebrate to-day.

But it is not of her death that we think chiefly on August 15th. We let our thoughts dwell more particularly on the second mystery celebrated on this day—her victory over the tomb and her resurrection. But that is not all. If the most holy Virgin rose from the dead, what place among saints and angels does she occupy in heaven? This is the third mystery proposed by the Church for our consideration—the triumphant Assumption of our Lady. This festival, therefore, has three objects: Our Lady dies, and her death is infinitely precious in God's sight; she rises, and her body is free from all corruption of the tomb; she is exalted to heaven and crowned with the greatest glory by God. So we have to remember the death, resurrection and assumption of the most holy Mother of God.

I. **Her death.** St. Augustine, commenting on Ps. 115, says: *Si pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus, mors certe Mariæ pretiosissima,* and this on account of her merit in three phases of her life, (a) *Virgo, intra domum;* (b) *Comes, ad*

ministerium; (c) *Mater Dei.* Ever since the Ascension of her divine Son she might have said *Amore langueo, Caritate vulnerata sum.* Her tears, her joys, the spread of Christianity could not quench the fire of her love; her prayer was: *Moriatur anima mea morte justorum.*

II. **Her resurrection.** (Read St. John Damascene's sermon on this festival, as given in the Breviary lessons.) Tertullian, who wrote about a century after the death of the last apostle, says: "Being sanctified by her virginity and consecrated by the Incarnation of the Son of God, Mary's body surpassed even the purity of angels, and therefore it could not but become like them incorruptible." St. Augustine in his ninth sermon on the Assumption remarks: "There is a constant tradition, to which Greeks and Latins bear witness, and the holy doctors vouch for the truth of it. Any contrary opinion would shock my love and reverence for Mary; I should be horrified to believe or even to assert, that the body of the Mother of my God became the food of worms and decayed." St. Gregory the Great (590-604) collected the traditions contained in the liturgical books of various countries, and found that this festival was celebrated everywhere, though on different dates, so he decided that August 15th, should be the date fixed for the observance of our Lady's Assumption.

III. **The Assumption.** The last resting place of the dead is not forgotten, and we pay special honor to the tombs of famous men. We know where our Lord was buried, but there is no clue to our Lady's grave. It is uncertain whether it was at Jerusalem or at Ephesus. After she rose from the dead, no one thought of her tomb. Our Lady is distinguished from all other saints by her glorious and wonderful resurrection and assumption. Only their souls are in heaven, but Jesus and Mary are there in body as well as in soul. St. Jerome says: "The hosts of heaven escorted her to her throne." St. Athanasius: "Where is this throne? At her divine Son's right hand." St. Augustine: "Why is she exalted above all the angels? Because of her incomparable dignity."

We are forced to conclude that, on the joyful day of her triumph, Mary received glory upon glory, just as on earth she

had received grace upon grace. She had been humble in this world, it was right that she should be exalted in heaven. She thanked God for the obscurity of her life at Nazareth, and she was rewarded with brilliant glory. She differed outwardly in no respect from other women, appearing to be merely the wife of a plain working-man, and her reward was exalted glory. Christ's apostles wrought many miracles, but she wrought none, and received in compensation a powerful glory, for her power is felt, wherever any Christian calls to her for help. At Nazareth she did the ordinary commonplace work of a small household, and instead of these humble tasks she now possesses in heaven unrivalled glory in virtue of her office and ministry. She is admitted to God's councils, and is the channel through which His benefits and graces are bestowed upon us.

O blessed Virgin Mary, from thy lofty throne to which thy merits have entitled thee, listen to our supplications. Thou art the advocate of sinners and Queen of heaven; thou reignest above all angels in virtue of thy dignity, above even the greatest saints on account of thy goodness. Our country is consecrated to thee, many of its churches are dedicated to thy honor. Extend thy protection to us, make us love thee better and serve thee with more zeal; then we shall hope to glorify thee in future in the everlasting bliss of heaven. Amen.

The Assumption

"My life is magnified this day above all my days."—Judith xii. 18.

Two thoughts. No day was ever more glorious for Mary; no day was ever more full of happiness for mankind.

I. **A glorious day for Mary** was the day of her death, which marked the triumph of her love. The saints die in the grace of God, but necessarily belong to death, but Mary, being Immaculate, could no more be subject to death, than could her divine Son. It was His will to taste the bitterness of death, and Mary, following His example, died by the force of love. Her resurrection marks the triumph of her motherhood. Being a pure Virgin, she could not experience the corruption

of the tomb. Love of Jesus caused her to die, His love of her made her triumph over death. She rose to heaven, and her assumption marks the triumph of her humility. No saint was ever so humble as our Lady; hence no saint could occupy so lofty a throne in heaven. Humility so profound, coupled with the exceptional privileges bestowed upon her by God, formed the utmost self-abasement, and it was rewarded by a corresponding degree of glory.

II. **A happy day for mankind.** (a) A token of grace and mercy. Our Lady's desire for our salvation assures us that we have in her an advocate with God in heaven; she is both zealous and powerful in her intercession. (b) A token of perfection and sanctity. Our Lady's virtues make her our model, one that is truly perfect and necessary for us to follow. (c) A token of glory and happiness. Our Lady's bliss in heaven attracts us thither. Nothing can overthrow or mar it, and it encourages us to do our best to share it. Consequently the Assumption should fill us with confidence. It was the great sign that appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun (Apoc. xii. 1).

The Assumption

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name together."—Ps. 33, 4.

A great and beautiful solemnity! Our Lady is taken up into heaven after just passing through the darkness of the tomb; let us rejoice with her at her Assumption. Three thoughts: no exalted position was ever 1. so well deserved, 2. so worthily honored, 3. so beneficially used.

I. **A well deserved exaltation.** The Church to-day applies to Mary, Mother of Jesus, the gospel concerning Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. "Mary hath chosen the better part." (Luke x. 42.) Our Lady chose:

(a) Inviolable purity, which she valued so highly as to prefer it to the honor of being Mother of God. "I know not man; I wish to preserve my virginity." She was always spotless, free from even the smallest fault.

(b) Exact obedience. Was she happy because she was a mother? No, because she had done God's will. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke xi. 28). She thought only of God's will, commandments and good pleasure. She never ceased to depend upon God, to act for and in union with Him.

(c) Profound humility. The Holy Spirit implanted this humility in her heart, and it was so pleasing to God that He exalted her. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." She could ascend no higher, because it had been impossible for her to sink to a lower depth (Ephes. iv. 9). Thus by her purity she obtained the throne nearest to God; by her obedience she earned the most glorious crown; by her humility she won the most exalted honor."

II. **A worthily honored exaltation.** In the Canticle of Canticles the question is asked: *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit?* Was it really a daughter of Adam? Consider:

(a) The magnificent scene. Heaven opened, the angels escorted Mary, chanting as they did for the King of Glory. Think of our Lord's welcome to His mother.

(b) Her throne. Mary sits at her Son's right hand, just as He sits at the right hand of God. When King Solomon met his mother, "a throne was set for her, and she sat on his right hand" (3 Kings ii. 19).

(c) Her intense happiness. In heaven there are many different mansions for the saints (John xiv. 2), but the most magnificent belongs to Mary, with all the treasures of grace and mercy. Here below all graces were found in her, she was *gratia plena*, and this constitutes her glory in heaven.

III. **A beneficially used exaltation.** Mardochai told Esther that her exaltation was to make her the deliverer of her nation. In Mary God has given us:

(a) A Queen who listens to us. The angels see and know our character, for, being pure spirits, they can see our spirits, our souls. Still more will Mary, who is exalted above them, take an interest in our salvation, hear our prayers, perceive our needs.

(b) A charitable Queen. Like God, she gave her Son to the

world; the existence of sinners gave rise to her privileges. In heaven she can desire nothing so much as the reign of Christ, our conversion and happiness. So she sympathizes with our sorrows, and exerts herself to help us.

(c) A powerful Queen. At Nazareth, Jesus was subject to her. In heaven His filial love is perfect, the power of His Mother's prayers is boundless, and there is no limit to the favors she can obtain.

Peroration. We have seen that her elevation was well deserved, let us imitate her virtues, it was worthily honored, let us contemplate her glory, it was beneficially used, let us ask her intercession. O peerless Virgin, hear my prayer, come to my aid. Thou art my hope in this world of misery and in my expectation of a life of glory hereafter.

The Assumption

"Her sepulchre shall be glorious."—Is. xi. 10.

A threefold triumph. Love triumphs over pain; holiness over corruption, heaven over earth.

I. **Love triumphant over pain.** When our loved ones die, we are crushed by pain and sorrow, but it was not so with Mary. She died of longing to see her divine Son again; she fell into a sleep of love, and her soul left her body in an ecstasy of love.

II. **Holiness triumphant over corruption.** The sin of Adam brought all evils into the world, including the corruption of the tomb; but Mary had no share in this sin, for as the eternal Word became incarnate within her, her flesh was, as it were, deified. The Word was united with this soul so perfectly full of holiness. There was never in her the least rebellion against God.

III. **Heaven triumphant over earth.** God created our bodies for union with immortal souls, but the bodies are retained by earth, until the day of judgment. But our Lady's body was carried in glory to heaven, received a glorious welcome there, and occupies the highest place in glory, assigned to her by God. St. Bernard says: "On earth the divine Word found nothing

better than Mary, consequently He gives her the best place in heaven."

NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"Remember this day."—Exod. xiii. 3.

Only three birthdays are observed by the Church, those of our Lord, our Lady and St. John the Baptist. Even the greatest saints were born with the stain of original sin. St. John's birthday was a day of joy. "Many shall rejoice in his nativity" (Luke i. 14). That of our Lord was a day of glory. "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke ii. 14). Mary's humility prevented the evangelists from recording her birth, but it was also a time of joy and glory.

Let us consider to-day (1) our Lady's birth, (2) her personality.

I. **Our Lady's birth.** An humble home in Nazareth, a cradle already glorious, for certainly the angels sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." Glory and peace were there. The time was drawing near when the Messias would appear, and this child was to be His mother.

(a) *Her parents.* Joachim and Anna. Do we know anything of them? Tradition tells us that the angel of the Incarnation appeared to this aged couple, as subsequently to Zachary, to Mary herself and to Joseph, and as previously he had revealed to the prophet Daniel the number of weeks of years that must still elapse before the coming of the Messias. Picture the prayers, tears and vows in which Anna revealed the desire of her heart.

Let us go a step further back, and think of their forefathers, holy and illustrious men, princes, priests and kings. They had inherited the meekness of David (Ps. 131, 1), the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Asa, the piety of Josaphat, the zeal of Ezechias for the service of God, and, to crown all, the faith of Abraham.

(b) *Her privileges.* We are by birth children of wrath and sin, deprived of grace, incapable of good works, unworthy of glory. But Mary was immaculate, adorned with all the graces,

blessed by God. *Ave, gratia plena.* To her, even better than to Judith, apply the words: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people" (Jud. xv. 10). The earthly Jerusalem, to which she was to give the Saviour of the world, the heavenly Jerusalem, to which she would give glory through the saints, who owe their salvation to Christianity. Israel, God's chosen people, by the fulfilment of prophecies; Israel, the Christians of succeeding generations, whose great advocate she was destined to be. She was the honor of her people since she gave them their Messias. Hence "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7). Yes, Mary, spouse of the Eternal Wisdom, thou art indeed fair, in thee all is perfect.

(c) *Her mission.* Before her cradle, as before that of St. John, the question might well be asked: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?" God in His infinite wisdom had foreordained everything. "I was set up from eternity" (Prov. viii. 23). Why? That she might be at once virgin and mother (St. Bernard). Like God the Father, she could say to Christ: "Thou art my beloved Son" (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5. 2 Peter i. 17).

II. **Our Lady's personality.** She might have said: "I came out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn before all creatures" (Ecclus. xxiv. 5). She stands first:

(a) By reason of her nobility. She was descended from David through Nathan (St. Luke) whereas her future spouse, St. Joseph, was descended from him through Solomon (St. Matthew). God predestined, foretold, announced her as Mother of the Saviour. Judith, Esther and others were types of her; she was to be the Queen of Christians, angels and saints, and terrible to hell.

(b) By reason of her sanctity. Eve, at her creation, before the fall, was destined to be mother of all human beings who were to praise God. After the fall there were many holy women under the old dispensation. Since the foundation of Christianity there have been holy women in the Gospels, in religious life, women devoted to works of charity. But Mary is far above all, as her sanctity proceeded directly from God.

(c) By reason of the graces bestowed upon her. Everyone appointed to any office possesses power more or less extensive, according to the duty that he has to fulfil. God gives us graces proportionate to the vocation to which He calls us. Mary's mission was more exalted than that of any other woman.

(d) By reason of her virtues. Study the litany; read the Lives of the Saints, consider the virtues of the chief persons in Holy Scripture and in the Church. Mary possessed every one of these virtues and in a far higher degree than anyone else. Look at each virtue separately and think which saint practised it most perfectly. Mary is superior to that saint; she alone is more perfect than each individually and all collectively. It is impossible for any human being to practise a virtue more perfectly than she did, or in a higher degree; our divine Lord alone could do this.

Peroration. O sweet and lovable Mary, no one is fairer, no one is greater than thou art. Who could fail to love thee? Thou art the life of my soul; thou art first in everything. I will do my best to serve and love thee always. Amen.

Alternative Plan

Two points. God's designs; our Lady's acquiescence.

I. **God's designs** are the reason of our reverencing Mary's birth, for God has three special attributes—holiness, glory and power, and He communicated them to her.

Holiness. Neither angel nor man is perfect in God's sight; but He created Mary to be the holiest of virgins. *Gratia plena.* Grace of predestination and grace of justification.

Glory. He created her to be the most glorious of mothers. "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Power. She is the most powerful of creatures, and this is proved by three facts: 1. At Nazareth she had control over the Son of God. 2. Her maternity is divine. 3. Her holiness unequalled.

II. **Mary's correspondence with God's designs.** Fullness of grace was bestowed upon her, and she responded to it by dis-

playing fullness of circumspection. She spoke little, was busy about her work, did not care to go out, was frugal in her food, and had no taste for gossip with other women.

She received fullness of glory, and displayed fullness of humility. To the angel she spoke of herself as the handmaid of the Lord. To St. Elizabeth she said: "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaiden." In the Magnificat the Holy Spirit extols her: "He hath exalted the humble." She possessed fullness of power, and displayed fullness of charity. Consequently she went to see and serve Elizabeth; she obtained the miracle at Cana. Later on she taught the apostles in the Cenacle, and now in heaven she desires always the beneficial results of the Cross on Calvary, and helps us to attain to salvation.

Peroration. Let us follow her example, pray, struggle and work in order to correspond to God's graces and our Lady's protection.

THE HOLY NAME OF MARY

SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"How admirable is thy name in the whole earth!"—Ps. 7, 1.

Next to the name of Jesus, no name is greater than that of the Blessed Virgin. The feast of the Holy Name of Jesus leads us on to that of the name of Mary. You can easily understand why this is so: Mary did so much for the salvation of the world.

Two thoughts. Holy Scripture. Our Lady's personality.

I. **Holy Scripture.** God predestined her from the beginning. *Tota pulchra es, et macula non est in te.* She could say of her predestination: *Ab aeterno ordinata sum.* Even to Adam God announced the mother of the Redeemer, who should be victorious over Satan. Afterwards He allowed certain chosen women to be types of her. *Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri.* Consider further her parentage; what was she at birth? Listen to the angel's words: "Hail, full of grace." Why was she born? To be our Saviour's Mother.

II. **Mary's personality.** She occupies the highest rank in virtue of her nobility as a descendant of David, Mother of the Messias, Queen of angels and saints. She is highest because of her holiness. She is highest because of the graces bestowed upon her. She is highest because of her goodness. She possessed all virtues and in a greater degree than any other saint.

PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"Arise, make haste . . . and come."—CANT. ii. 10.

Our Lady is the model for souls consecrated to God, the model for all who serve Him in spirit and in truth.

I. **Joachim and Anna presented her.** A child is the delight of its parents, and the thought of losing it is agony. "Give me children, otherwise I shall die" (Gen. xxx. 1). Jacob and Rachel owed their son Joseph to God. Many parents devote their children to worldliness and vanity, but Joachim and Anna consecrated their child to God, although she was their only child, most perfect and dearly loved. Mary was their only child; she was born in answer to their prayers, fasts and tears. "One is my dove" (Cant. vi. 8). She was to be the Mother of God's only Son, incarnate for us; and she was an only daughter. (St. Euthymus, *in c. 19 Joan.*) She did not remain long in her father's house, but was transferred to the Temple. Her parents did not ask that their only child should be brought up for them in accordance with the laws of the world, but on the contrary: *Anna haud cunctata est eam ad templum adducere, ac Deo reddere, et promissum praestare* (St. Greg. of Nyssa, serm. for Christmas). They presented her gladly, generously and without hesitation.

Mary was a perfect daughter. "My perfect one is but one" (Cant. vi. 8). She alone possessed the perfections of all created beings. The light of the stars is eclipsed by that of the sun, and the perfection of the saints is eclipsed by that of Mary. Having been watched over by God from the beginning, she was perfect in all ways, and would be worthy one day of her divine motherhood. Anna and Joachim gave her up, offered her to God; she was their most costly sacrifice.

Mary was their dearly loved daughter. They obtained her from God by a miracle in their old age. Her perfection won for her the admiration of the angels. How dearly must they have loved her. As David loved Absalom, Isaac loved Esau, Jacob loved Joseph. No father or mother ever felt more love for their child. Alas, some parents have only a selfish love of their children, others thwart their desire to lead a holy life or to enter religion, others seem devoid of all affection. But Joachim and Anna, accompanied by friends and relatives, consecrated their flesh and blood in the temple. (St. John Chrys. and St. Germanus.) They were parents of the most perfect daughter who ever had lived or would live in this world.

II. **Mary presented herself to God.** From the beginning Mary was present in the mind of God, who was preparing her for her mission. "I was set up from eternity and of old before the earth was made" (Prov. viii. 23). She was immaculate from the first moment of her existence. At three years old she made a willing, complete and irrevocable offering of herself.

1. Her offering was prompt and willing. *Qui cito dat, bis dat: tarde velle nolentis est* (Seneca, *lib. I Benefic.* c. 5). Mary gave herself in her earliest childhood; Abraham was 120 when he offered Isaac in sacrifice, Samuel was a baby, *infantulus* (1 Kings i.) when his mother gave him up. Mary, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, came of her own accord at the age of three.

At the deluge Noe saw the dove return, not the raven. Many young people on leaving home give themselves up to worldly things and aim one at pleasure, another at riches, and a third at honors. But Mary was the dove that went to the holy ark, viz., the Temple. Many resolve to give themselves later to God, and to be converted on their death bed. Consequently they continue to serve the world and Satan.

2. Her offering was complete. People profess to be devout, and do as little as possible, but Mary offered God her mind to contemplate divine mysteries, her heart to burn with love of Him, her hands to work at adorning the Temple, her eyes to exclude from them the vanities of the world, her lips and tongue, to be used only in praising God. Who ever made so perfect and complete an offering of himself to God? Most

people seek wealth, honors and their fellow creatures rather than God.

3. Her offering was irrevocable. She had no desire to take back what she had given; she gave once for all. Her charity was pure and generous, and there was no withdrawal from her consecration.

We, alas, pray and make our confessions, and resolve to live for God, but no sooner do we return from the altar and leave the church than we forget our resolution. Would God be so changeable? Is not sin always detestable? good works always rewarded?

Peroration. St. Gregory of Nazianzus (Orat. 10) invites us to give everything to Him who has given us all things. Let us follow Mary's example; she left her parents in order to give herself to God. "O King, I am thine and all that I have" (3 Kings xx. 4). "I am Thine, save Thou me" (Ps. 118, 94).

The Presentation

The greatness of Mary's gift

I. Mary's gift. From her childhood she consecrated herself to God, thus condemning the cowardice of those who put off their conversion, and becoming the model of really pious souls. She consecrated herself wholly and without reserve, thus condemning the lack of faith and generosity displayed by those who do nothing beyond what is absolutely necessary to entitle them to be considered Christians.

She consecrated herself irrevocably and for ever, thus condemning the fickleness of those who adopt in religion just what pleases them, and seldom obey its precepts.

II. **Greatness of Mary's gift.** Next to the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, no sacrifice could be more pleasing to God than that of our Lady.

No saint under the earliest, or under the Mosaic, or under the Christian law ever equalled her in holiness. None was ever so rich in merit or so pleasing to God. No saint ever offered anything to God so freely or so generously. Consider with

regard to Mary (a) her feelings of gratitude and devotion, (b) her intention, (c) the time and place of her offering.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"There is not a spot in thee."—CANT. iv. 7.

This was the belief of the earliest Fathers and Doctors, long before the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was defined by the Church. Three witnesses: God, the angels, the Church.

I. **God.** St. Augustine says that the Scriptures are a letter written by God. Now in Genesis iii. 15 we read: "She shall crush thy head."

In Proverbs ix. 1 we read: "Wisdom hath built herself a house," and God would certainly not use materials already defiled by the devil; that would be incredible. Canticle of Canticles, iv. 12, "My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed." The earthly paradise was not so securely closed that sin and the serpent could not enter, but the serpent could find no access to this new paradise (St. John Damascene). St. Bernard asks how anyone could believe that God would have become incarnate in flesh sullied in any way, since it was easy for Him to have flesh that was perfect (Serm. 49). Abraham forbade his son to take a wife of the race of Chanaan; would the Holy Spirit have chosen as spouse one who had already belonged to Satan?

II. **The Angels.** Gabriel was chosen rather than any other angel to come and say: "Hail, full of grace," *Ave.* St. Bernard derives the word from the Greek α privative and *vae,* woe. Hence ave or avae would mean without woe. Mary was free from three kinds of woe, that of venial sin, that of mortal sin and that of original sin (Serm. 52).

Gratia plena. St. Thomas Aquinas: *Virgo sancta totam Spiritus Sancti sibi hauserat gratiam* (cat. aur. ad cap. 1 Luc.). St. Bernadine: *Tanta gratia Virgini, quanta uni creaturae dari possibile est* (Serm. 61, art. 2).

Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus. The Lord is with her always, without any distinction of time; it is her natural con-

dition. No woman can be compared with her; she is blessed above all others.

Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te. The Most High had already sanctified His tabernacle (Ps. 45, 5). "There is one most high Creator Almighty . . . He created her in the Holy Ghost" (Ecclus. i. 8, 9).

III. **The Church.** St. Irenaeus lays down the principle: *Non oportet apud alios veritatem quaerere, quando facile est ab Ecclesia sumere* (*Adv. haer.* iii). In the Church we find (a) apostles, who founded her; (b) pontiffs who govern her; (c) councils representing her.

(a) Apostles. According to tradition, they were present at our Lady's death. St. James of Jerusalem in his liturgy speaks of "Mary Immaculate, our most glorious Lady, Mother of God" (Quoted at the 6th Council, c. 33). St. Mark in his liturgy calls her immaculate, free from guilt of any kind. Francis de Souza, who was bishop of Osma 300 years ago, compiled at Valladolid a book in which he collected a great number of apostolic testimonies regarding our Lady.

(b) Sovereign Pontiffs. St. Thomas Aquinas (3a pars q. 27 a. 1) lays down the principle: *Non celebratur festum in Ecclesia, nisi pro aliquo sancto.* And we find that Pope Sixtus IV allowed, ordered and celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception; he issued four constitutions on the subject, fixed the name of the feast, and approved of two offices compiled for it by religious orders. Innocent VIII sanctioned the use of the name by some nuns at Toledo. Julius II, Leo X, Clement VIII enriched the festival with indulgences and sanctioned the erection of churches and monasteries with this dedication. Paul V forbade anyone to question this privilege enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin. Alexander VII renewed all the favors granted by his predecessors. Pius IX issued the decree of 1854.

(c) *Councils.* The Council of Nicæa declared: "We venerate the image of the Mother of God, our blameless and immaculate Lady." The Sixth General Council: "Thou hast remained immaculate since the first moment of thy creation, because thou wast to bear the Creator of all holiness." The Council of Trent, (sess. 5) did not include the Blessed Virgin in the decree concerning

original sin, and renewed the penalties imposed by Sixtus IV upon those who denied the Immaculate Conception.

Peroration. O Mary, we may well say that thou art spotless; God, the angels and the Church bear witness to the fact; my own heart, my intellect and faith proclaim it. In thee are all grace, beauty and perfection. I will love and reverence thee always.

The Immaculate Conception

"God . . . hath made my way blameless."—Ps. 17, 33.

Three points: Mary, though a descendant from Adam, did not inherit the stain of original sin; though the daughter of Joachim, she was free from the misery that besets the human race; was a perfect creature, replete with every grace.

I. **A descendant from Adam.** "If sons, then heirs" was a universal law with but two exceptions. Christ, in His divine personality, and Mary, created for a special purpose, were without sin. In Mary's case there three reasons why this was so.

1. *God.* "She was chosen by Him to be the Mother of God." (St. Thomas Aquinas 3. p. q. 37). "God chose her to be such that he need not feel ashamed of her" (St. Peter Damian). "It was essential even that she should be worthy of Him" (St. Bernard).

2. *Creator.* If He had not created her thus perfect, it would have been because (a) He was unable to do so; or (b) He was unwilling to do so, or (c) He did not know how to do so. Any one of these statements would be blasphemous; God would not yield to the devil.

3. *Redeemer.* Our Lord had to begin by redeeming His Mother. He was bound to do more for her than for any other creature (St. Bernardine of Siena). He removed from her all possibility of original sin, before thinking of delivering others from it (St. Augustine). It is better to prevent a fall, than to wait until it has taken place in order to raise him who has fallen (St. Antonius).

II. **Daughter of Joachim.** She possessed no defects and no weakness in mind or body, but had three conspicuous qualities:

light in her understanding, peace in her soul, love of God in her heart.

1. Her understanding. St. Bernardine of Siena: *Usum liberi arbitrii, atque lumen perfectum in intellectu.* We find, alas, nothing like this in the world.

2. Her soul. *Legem mentis lex carnis non infestabat, rebellio nulla, quietem spiritu affligebat* (St. Cyprian).

3. Her heart. Moses on Sinai and St. Paul in the third heaven beheld God. Mary was more perfect on account of her mission to be Mother of God. She enjoyed an intuitive vision, beatific love. Such is the general opinion of the Fathers.

III. **A perfect Creature, created in the state of grace.** She possessed (a) the sanctifying grace that rendered her lovable. "The most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle" (Ps. 45, 5). Mary at the Incarnation was truly the tabernacle of the Word.

(b) Abundant and unlimited grace. Amongst the Jews two kinds of measures were in use, one in ordinary business and the other in what concerned the sanctuary. Mary possessed all the measures of the saints.

(c) Constant and permanent grace. She was the tabernacle of God. "God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved" (Ps. 45, 6). Christ said: *Ad eum veniemus, et mansionem apud eum faciemus.* Far more truly might it be said of Mary.

MAY DEVOTIONS

I. Course of Outlines for Every Day in the Month

1. *The Month of Mary.* 1. *Quid?* A duty to honor Mary—the foundation, kind and degree of our honor. 2. A consolation to trust in Mary; her reputation; the conditions of her protection. *Quare?* 1. Her privileges, received from God. 2. Her virtues. 3. Her power, exerted in making intercession for us. *Quomodo?* For Catholics an obligation. Public devotions in church. Indulgences granted by the Church.

2. *What is Mary?* 1. Let us consider her from the point of view of God. She is the most exalted of creatures. She wears

the triple diadem of excellence, power and goodness. She possesses fullness of grace; she is superior to all the saints and angels. 2. Let us consider her from the point of view of man. She is queen of the human race for three reasons, (a) as Mother of the Messias, (b) as co-Redeemer of men, (c) as Mother of Christians.

3. *Devotion to Mary.* Supernaturally revealed. The angel Gabriel sent by God. St. Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, the Church at the Council of Ephesus (431). Popular devotion. Festivals of our Lady, recurring in every month. Numerous shrines dedicated to her, visited by many people. The Rosary, her Psalter, recited by everybody. Daily devotion. Altar dedicated to our Lady, especial mention in Masses and prayers. Medals and scapulars. The Angelus, said three times each day.

4. *Life of our Lady.* First years. I. The Immaculate Conception. 1. God. Texts from Genesis, Proverbs, Canticle of Canticles. 2. The angels. Each word of Gabriel's salutation. 3. The Church, apostles, Popes, councils, tradition.

II. Her Nativity. Mary's glory. Of whom was she born? For what end? With what privileges? Joy of mankind. The morning star; beauty of the moon, splendor of the sun.

III. Her Presentation by Joachim and Anna. Our Lady offered herself early, without reserve, for ever.

5. *Life of our Lady.* Nazareth. I. Her marriage prescribed by ancient Jewish customs. God sanctioned it, but allowed the most angelic virtues still to exist in her, by the grace of the Holy Ghost.

II. The Annunciation. Mary: humility, virginity, saluted by an angel. The angel; God's messenger humbled himself and exalted her. God was brought into alliance with us through Mary in Christ.

III. The Visitation. Mary went in haste, saluted Elizabeth, praised God, foretold her own glory.

6. *Life of our Lady.* Bethlehem and Jerusalem. I. Bethlehem. 1. Jesus, the humility of the manger, the first stage of our redemption. 2. The shepherds, led by angels, the first Christians. 3. The magi, princes and scholars, the first powerful worshippers of Christ.

II. Jerusalem. The Purification, Jesus, Mary, Simeon, Anna. Persecution, Herod, the holy Innocents, exile.

7. *Life of our Lady.* Galilee and Judea. I. Galilee, Nazareth, Life of the Holy Family, daily work, fervent prayer, reading of prophetical books and psalms. II. Judea. 1. Jesus, His ministry, preaching, miracles. 2. Mary at Cana, in the synagogues, on Calvary. 3. In the Cenacle at Pentecost, at Ephesus, at Gethsemani.

8. *Our Lady's Holiness.* I. Mary in Holy Scripture. Prophecies, types, the Gospel. II. Mary and the saints, full of graces, honored by the greatest saints; invariably she is invoked first before any other saint. III. Mary and the Blessed Trinity, chosen by God the Father, Mother of God the Son, filled with God the Holy Ghost.

9. *Our Lady's Sublimity.* I. Justly merited, bestowed by God, sustained by her virtues, perfected on Calvary. II. Worthily employed, at Nazareth; in the company of the apostles; in the course of ages. III. Always manifested, Gospels, the Church, devout souls.

10. *Our Lady in Christian Civilization.* Special virtues that she inculcates, prudence, humility, charity. Influence that she exerts as Mother, Queen and Example. III. Cultus of which she is the object. St. John and the apostles, the Fathers of the Church, truly Christian souls.

11. *Our Lady in history.* Nature of her cultus, honor, reverence, imitation. The cultus of Mary has raised the position of women. In pagan times woman was a slave, possessing no dignity, scarcely regarded as a human being, but merely as a chattel or a luxury. Under Christianity woman has risen to a much higher position, motherhood is held in honor, virginity respected, and the sex often becomes heroic. The first Eve fell, the second Eve was exalted.

The cultus of Mary has been the inspiration of great men. In religious life of saints such as Bernard, Norbert, Dominic, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyola. In the world of men and women of every rank. In times of calamity, it has called forth heroic virtue in women. In art and literature, pictures, buildings, music, etc.

12. *Visions and apparitions of our Lady.* I. To lowly shepherds. Joan of Arc, La Salette, Lourdes. II. To pious souls—

instances without number. III. To the founders and members of religious Orders—St. Norbert, St. Dominic, B. John Berchmans, etc.

13. Our Lady's motherly love. I. Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Love and faith at Bethlehem—confidence and sympathy at Cana. Suffering and obedience on Calvary. II. Mary, the Mother of Christians. On Calvary "Behold thy Son." In the Cenacle, where she joined with the apostles in prayer. In the Church, traditional and well grounded devotion to Mary. III. Mary our hope, as our co-redeemer she desires our salvation; as a mighty Mother she intercedes effectually for us; as Queen of heaven, she reserves a special place for those most devoted to her.

14. *Cultus of our Lady.* I. The happiness of Christians. In the Memorare: "Never was it heard," etc. In the Lives of the Saints "to Jesus through Mary." II. The terror of evil spirits. Mary triumphant over the devil, converts sinners, delivers souls from purgatory. III. The Glory of heaven. She protects pious souls in the world; in heaven she is queen of saints and angels, and the everlasting crown of the elect.

15. *Titles of our Lady.* I. Her dignity; she stands preeminent in nobility, sanctity, grace and virtue. She possesses sublime gifts, her mission was unique. "All generations shall call me blessed." II. Invocations sanctioned by the Church. Go through the Litany. Eleven invocations begin with "Mother," six with "Virgin," in thirteen we think of her as our model, in four we refer to her power, and in ten to her as our queen.

16. *Feasts in honor of Mary.* Days of devotion each week. Saturday in each week. (This observance is of apostolic origin.) Each month there is at least one festival, either fixed or movable. Each year—two months dedicated to our Lady. From time to time special anniversaries and jubilees occur.

17. *Shrines of our Lady.* Places of peculiar devotion. In every church there is an altar dedicated to her; many churches bear her name; there are many humble shrines where miracles are wrought. These shrines are visited by millions from far and near. Local history bears witness to the antiquity of this devotion. We often see ex votos in honor of Mary.

18. *Some more special shrines* where our Lady is honored

under a variety of names. (Comment on some of the names.) Names that are widely known are those of Lourdes, Maria Einsiedeln, Kevelaer, Loreto, La Salette, and others.

19. *Scapulars of our Lady.* A scapular is an object of devotion. Its primary meaning, its holy origin, its spiritual advantages, the obligations which we incur and which tend to our sanctification. Scapulars of Mount Carmel, the Immaculate Conception, the Passion and Sacred Hearts, Our Lady of Dolours (Servite), Our Lady of Mercy. All have the same end, viz., to unite us with our Lady, to secure for us her protection, and to assure the salvation of our souls.

20. *Prayers to our Lady,* a mark of devotion. I. Private prayers, said by all Catholics; the Angelus, the Rosary, the three "Hail Mary's," the scapular prayers, etc. II. *Public prayers of the Church.* Regina Coeli, Salve Regina, Inviolata, Stabat Mater, the Litany, etc. III. *Official prayer of the Church.* The Office of the Blessed Virgin, said by various congregations of nuns and pious persons in the world.

21. *The Hail Mary.* A prayer given us from heaven.

I. In the Gospel. 1. Gabriel, "the strength of God," came to announce the Messias. 2. Elizabeth, inspired by God, and mother of our Lord's precursor. 3. Pope Urban IV, in 1262 added the Holy Name, with indulgences.

II. In the Church. 1. Heresies against the Blessed Virgin. Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. added the second part of the prayer, beginning "Holy Mary." It emphasizes her divine maternity, her dignity and the protection that she extends to all men.

III. In popular devotion. The first part of the Hail Mary was in use from the earliest days of Christianity, but the Council of Ephesus, although it added the second part, did not order its use. It was only after the victory at Lepanto that Pope Pius V inserted the second part and the prayer in the Breviary. The Hail Mary was therefore much shorter originally, and we need not be astonished at the number of rosaries which saints before his time were accustomed to say.

22. *The Rosary,* our Lady's Psalter, 150 "Hail Mary's." What it is; by whom it was devised; under what circumstances. It has three material elements, the Pater, Ave and Gloria, and three

formal elements, the three classes of mysteries. It possesses great intrinsic value, for it makes us contemplate the mysteries, and also great extrinsic value, because so many indulgences are attached to it.

23. *The Rosary.* Its double use. It is a book containing our Lord's own prayer, an inspired salutation, and the doxology in honor of the Blessed Trinity. It is a meditation, a summary of the Gospel narrative; the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries.

24. *The Rosary.* Its fruits. I. Communion of Saints; spiritual benefits come to us from Christ, our Lady, and the Saints. The Saints have always prayed and meditated on these subjects. II. Consolation for the souls in purgatory. Faith in God's mercy, sufferings of Christ, hope of glory in heaven. Many indulgences attached to the Rosary. III. Sanctification of souls. The most beautiful prayers, constant store of merit, perfect edification, certainty of graces bestowed.

25. *The Rosary.* A practical devotion. The joyful mysteries, as applied to the individual and to society. In the same way, the Sorrowful and the Glorious Mysteries.

26. *Confraternities and congregations dedicated to our Lady.* I. Their origin and necessity, in order to bind Catholics together. II. Their approval by the Church and their spiritual advantages. III. The sanctification of members and of parochial good works is promoted.

27. *The last years of our Lady's life.* I. St. John the Evangelist, Calvary, the Cenacle, Jerusalem. II. Our Lady at Ephesus, persecution in Judea. III. Our Lady's return to Jerusalem; a time of comparative peace; her desire to be near the holy places.

38. *The last three days of our Lady's life.* Tradition tells us of the miraculous arrival of the apostles. St. John gave her Holy Communion; St. Peter anointed her. The place of her burial is unknown; it was probably in Gethsemani. Our Lady is not to be deified. Her resurrection and assumption. St. Thomas came late—angelic strains—tomb contained nothing but flowers.

29. *Coronation in heaven.* The angels, the Blessed Trinity. On earth we ought to crown our Lady with heartfelt devotion.

30. *Power of our Lady's intercession.* She is privileged by

God. Queen of saints and angels, effectual intercession. Co-redeemer, she ardently desires our salvation.

31. *Consecration to Mary.* Her supreme mission deserves it, our interests demand it, her manifestations of mercy reward it.

II. Course of Subjects for Every Day in the Month

The Three Crowns of the Blessed Virgin

The month is here divided into three periods each of ten days. During the first consider the emblems that foretold our Lady's birth; during the second the types foreshadowing her; during the third the titles conferred upon her by the Church. As a second point in each discourse the preacher may discuss some virtue or practice connected with the emblem, type or title, taking our Lady as an example in each case.

Eve of the Month of Mary. *Ave Maria,* a greeting to the month and to our Lady. *Salve Regina.*

First Crown

1. 1. *Aurora consurgens* (Cant. vi. 9). 2. Faith.
2. 1. *Pulchra ut luna* (*Ibid.*). 2. Hope.
3. 1. *Electa ut sol.* (*Ibid.*). 2. Charity.
4. 1. *Hortus conclusus* (*Ibid.* iv. 12). 2. Purity.
5. 1. *Fons signatus* (*Ibid.*). 2. Peace.
6. 1. *Columba mea* (*Ibid.* vi. 8). 2. Simplicity.
7. 1. Ark of Noe (Gen. vi. and viii.). 2. Propagation of the Faith.
8. 1. Ark of the Covenant (Exod. xxv., Josue iii.). 2. Dignity of a Christian.
9. 1. Root of Jesse (Is. xi. and liii.). 2. Humility.
10. 1. Tower of David (Cant. iv. and vii). 2. Temptation.

Second Crown

11. 1. Eve. 2. Obedience to the law.
12. 1. Sara (two of this name, the wife of Abraham and the wife of Tobias). 2. Brotherly love.

13. 1. Rebecca. 2. Desire of heaven.
14. 1. Rachel. 2. Sanctifying grace.
15. 1. Mary, sister of Moses. 2. Practices of devotion.
16. 1. Esther. 2. Prayer.
17. 1. Judith. 2. Zeal.
18. 1. The Queen of Saba (3 Kings x.). 2. Vocation.
19. 1. Ruth. 2. Communion.
20. 1. The mother of the Machabees. 2. The sufferings of Christ.

Third Crown

21. 1. Cause of our Joy. 2. Good example.
22. 1. Refuge of sinners. 2. Mercy.
23. 1. Health of the sick. 2. Visiting the sick.
24. 1. Comfort of the afflicted. 2. Sufferings.
25. 1. Help of Christians. 2. Watchfulness.
26. 1. Queen of Angels. 2. Prayer.
27. 1. Queen of all Saints. 2. Holiness.
28. 1. Mother of God. 2. Worship of Mary.
29. 1. Mother of Men. 2. Devotion to Mary.
30. 1. Gate of Heaven. 2. Death of the righteous.
31. 1. Consecration to Mary. 2. *Mane nobiscum.*

May Devotions for Churches, where there is not a Sermon every Evening

I. Opening of the May devotions. Ave Maria. God sent this greeting to earth; let us offer it to our Lady in heaven. Thus God and the angel were the first to do her honor. Following this precedent, every successive age has produced souls devoted to her; shrines are erected to her everywhere, and the tribute of love and gratitude is paid her. Consider the primitive period of the Church, the Middle Ages, and the present time. In honoring Mary we are following the example set us by God, Christ, the apostles, the saints and the Church.

II. *Predestination of Mary.* This was the sweetest manifestation of God's goodness, for as Creature, she is pre-eminent for her intelligence, love and glory; as Mother of God she stands

alone by reason of her privileges, virtues and humility; as God's cooperator in the task of saving the world, she is the most perfect of the human race, and, after our divine Saviour, the greatest model given us for our imitation.

III. *Her office in the Church* and to the human race in general. She was the second Eve for the redemption of the world. Her humility gave us our Saviour and atoned for original pride; and she raised women from their state of degradation. She is a merciful mediator; the consoler and protector of upright souls; the refuge of sinners; the help of cities and nations; she is acclaimed by the whole world.

IV. *The Immaculate Conception.* Christ, being the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, must have been able to preserve His Mother from sin. As she was Mother of the God of all sanctity, she needed this preservation. As she cooperated directly with the Blessed Trinity, it was essential that the devil should at no moment of her existence have been able to claim her as his own. This dogma adds glory to Mary, is advantageous to the faithful, and has been accepted by the Church in every age.

V. *Nativity of our Lady.* A day of hope and salvation, the birthday of our deliverer, the dawn of the Sun of Justice and Mercy. Analogies between Mary and the dawn. She is the source of learning, consolation and graces; she is our advocate and makes reparation for us. This is a glorious anniversary. Do the angels bless our birthdays? Have the graces that we received borne fruit in us? How ought we to correspond with them? Remember the vows made at baptism.

VI. *Life of our Lady.* 1. A life of humility and piety in the Temple and at Nazareth; worldly life is one of pride. 2. A life of poverty at Bethlehem, in Egypt and at Nazareth; worldly life aims at riches and honors. 3. A life of suffering from her birth to her death; worldly life seeks pleasures that are often deceptive and harmful. Which kind of life should ours be?

VII. *Divine Motherhood.* This motherhood is most *glorious,* because her Son was the founder of Christianity, by means of which the nations were restored to newness of life. It is most *holy,* because it was ordained of God, unites the Word with

humanity, preserves virginity intact, and is the perfect example, that none can fully imitate, of all that angelic virtue demands. Mary cooperated with her divine Son in His work on earth; she did so by means of her love, her blood, her virginal flesh, and her sorrows.

VIII. *Our Lady's motherly love.* Good children are their mothers' crown, and Jesus was preeminently Mary's whole crown and glory, possessing all the qualities of the most perfect of sons. We are His brethren by adoption, and so she loves us, and intercedes for us; she is all-powerful. She shows herself to be a most tender, loving mother, most worthy of our love.

IX. *Our Lady in history.* The cultus of Mary has completely altered the position of women, raising them from the state of degradation and slavery to which paganism had reduced them. The destiny of Mary proves beyond all question the superiority of Catholicism to all ancient religions, and demonstrates the loftiness of its purpose and the divinity of its origin. We owe to Catholicism the civilizations of nations, the respect paid to women, and the dignity of motherhood.

X. *Cultus of Mary.* We adore God and honor His friends; *latria, dulia;* our Lady is above all saints, and we pay her *hyperdulia.* Mary and the saints dwell in God's heaven. We honor our Lady, because of her incomparably high position; we respect her as our protector, advocate and helper; we follow her example, when she lived as a young girl with her parents and in the Temple; when she was spouse and housekeeper at Nazareth, and also as Mother of Christ, Mother of Christians.

XI. *Mary at the foot of the Cross.* Suffering is necessary in order to atone for sin. Christ though sinless suffered and died, and His mother shared His suffering. Pain must be accepted voluntarily, if it is to bring us any merit; their suffering was abundantly meritorious. Let us here study our Lady. St. Paul says that his sufferings filled up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ (Col. i. 24). Every Christian has to make expiation, and Christianity teaches us to endure pain and to make sacrifices. As Christ is God, it is difficult to follow His example, and easier to go Mary, who shared our humanity. Still at the present day the woman suffers and atones, consoles and

encourages. Women, mothers, look at Mary, who has exalted and ennobled you—suffer with her, reign with her. But for her, our Saviour would not have been born; but for women, many great deeds would never have been accomplished.

XII. *The holy heart of Mary.* A reasonable devotion, since the heart is the seat of piety and mercy, and the source of good works. It is a just devotion, since our Lady's heart has inspired many virtues and caused the perfection of many souls; it is a holy devotion, by means of which sinners have overcome their passions, resisted the devil, and learnt to serve God. We call a thing excellent if it attains the highest degree of perfection possible for it. What human heart can be compared with Mary's? We find noble examples in the history of great men, and the saints also served as our models, but Mary's heart is far above all. . . .

XIII. *Devout practices in honor of Mary.* We ought to serve God and honor the saints in spirit and in truth. We possess intelligence, heart and soul, as well as body. Hence we need external practices to express the spirit of our devotion. Our Lady is superior to all the saints, both in herself, and in her care for us; this is why we have so many pious practices in her honor; it is only right and just that they should exist. First the Hail Mary, either alone, or as part of the Angelus and of the Rosary. Then the prayers attached to the various scapulars, which are our Lady's livery or habit. Next hymns, antiphons and canticles. *Ave Maris Stella*—these form part of the public prayers of the Church, Confraternities, congregations, associations assemble in order that private prayers, being offered in common, may gain additional force.

Let us be really devout servants of Mary in all these things.

XIV. *Our Lady's Coronation.* The apostles gathered together to hear Mary's last words, she died, was carried by angels to heaven, and there crowned by God as queen of men and angels. Let us crown her with our love, gratitude and boundless confidence. How many have enjoyed her protection! Learned men and kings acknowledge her help. We crown those who are distinguished for goodness or intellect; a little girl wears a wreath when she makes her First Communion, and a bride wears one on her wedding-day. We lay wreaths on the coffins of our dead.

Mary has better claim to honor than any of these, however dearly loved. Let us therefore crown her with the roses of our Aves, and also with our virtues. Our hearts ought to unite and form a garland around her altar, and in heaven our souls will be her crown.

OCTOBER, THE MONTH OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Leo XIII decreed that October should be the month of the Rosary, and preachers will easily discover subjects for interesting instructions in the origin and arrangement of this devotion. It seems, however, expedient to make a few suggestions here, as many priests will no doubt expect to find something of the sort in a work of this description. If some of the topics have been mentioned before under the heading of May devotions, it is because the Rosary could not be altogether passed over in silence, but the plan of the present instructions is different.

A Course of Outlines for Every Day in the Month

1. *Our Lady's Protection.* Everything is due to her merits. Consider her perfect goodness. The saints chose her as their model. Pray then to her—*gratia plena.* We owe everything to her service. She prays to her Son for us, and He can refuse her nothing. She shared in the work of our redemption. We owe everything to her prayers. God desires our salvation; Mary acquiesced in the Incarnation, which led on to the Redemption.

2. *Devotion of the Rosary.* What is the Rosary? A prayer to God said in honor of Mary. Fifteen decades. Meditation on the fifteen chief mysteries. What enemies has the Rosary? The devil whom Mary overcame, the passions that cause our sins; the world that has no taste for what is divine and supernatural. What advantages has the Rosary? It makes us repeat the most beautiful prayers and meditate upon the most beautiful passages in the Gospel. It is our Lady's Psalter.

3. *The Rosary.* Its origin and author; the reason why it was preached. Immediate conversions resulting from it. It is now a universal devotion.

4. *Its constituent parts. Pater, Ave, Gloria.* (Their origin and the object of their use.) The three groups of mysteries. Jesus and Mary in the Gospel and in tradition.

5. *The Lord's Prayer.* I. The first part concerns God. First

an invocation, "Our Father who art in heaven," then three petitions for God, His Name, Kingdom and will.

6. *The Lord's Prayer.* II. The second part concerns man. Four petitions for ourselves—bread, material and spiritual; forgiveness, providence to watch over us, power to save us.

7. *The Angelic Salutation.* I. The angel of the Incarnation, speaking on behalf of God and the other angels.

II. Messianic prophecies about to be fulfilled.

III. Our Lady at Nazareth, engaged in prayer.

IV. The angels' dignity humbled in her presence.

8. *The Angel's words.* "Hail Mary." Ave. She was free from sin, original, mortal and venial. "Full of grace"—absolute and complete fullness. "The Lord is with thee"—the Blessed Trinity present with her. "Blessed art thou among women." These words were uttered by an angel from heaven, and so are the statement of a dogmatic truth.

9. *St. Elizabeth's words.* "Blessed art thou amongst women." St. Elizabeth repeats the angel's words. (Comment on each word.) "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This was the Messias, the Incarnate Word, foretold by the prophets; He, the long-expected, was about to come and establish the Church of God. "Jesus." The holy Name was inserted here by Urban IV, in 1262.

10. *The words added by the Church.* Council of Ephesus (431). The invocation recognizes our Lady's holiness and her divine motherhood. Our Lord possesses two natures, but is one Person. "Pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death." These words contain at once a dogma and a prayer. St. Pius V made them obligatory, after the victory at Lepanto.

11. *The Doxology.* Glory, according to men, is honor paid by one's country or in history. Glory, according to the Church, consists in the possession of virtue, a good conscience and the way to heaven. Glory, according to God, has nothing to do with earth, and belongs altogether to eternity.

Glory to the Father, our Creator, Preserver and Rewarder.

Glory to the Son, the Incarnate Word, our Saviour and Redeemer; the way, the truth and the life.

Glory to the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies each Christian by His

grace, who is bestowed in the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Order, who speaks through and watches over the Church, and who in heaven is the everlasting Spirit of Love that binds us to God.

12. *The greatness of the Rosary.* 1. Dignity of God, the source whence the matter of this devotion is derived. 2. The honor due to Jesus and Mary, the object of the devotion. 3. Our own interests, which are affected by it.

13. *Intrinsic value of the Rosary.* Great, because of the origin of the prayers composing it; because in it we meditate upon the mysteries of our redemption, and thereby advance in holiness.

14. *Various uses of the Rosary.* A special devotion to our Lady. A book of most beautiful prayers. A pious exercise at Mass, the Sacraments, etc.

15. *Fruits of the Rosary.* Communion of Saints; spiritual treasury of the Confraternity. Help for souls in Purgatory; indulgences. Way to heaven—efficacious means of sanctification.

16. *Rosary Confraternity.* An organized devotion possesses additional weight. The union of Christian souls tends to edification. The members pray for one another; spiritual help.

17. *Indulgences of the Rosary.* Indulgences in general. Plenary and partial indulgences attached to the Rosary.

18. *Great men in the Church who use the Rosary.* Popes and bishops; the Dominican Order; all the Saints.

19. *Great men in the world.* Emperors, kings, princes. Battles—Muret, Lepanto, Vienna.

20. *Beads and chaplets.* Origin and composition. Various chaplets; one chaplet, a third of the Rosary; the mysteries classified into three groups or chaplets.

21. *The Rosary in the past.* The first century of the Rosary. Its disuse and revival. Renewed fervor.

22. *The Rosary in the Nineteenth Century.* The Living Rosary at Lyons. Revival of the Dominican Order (Lacordaire). Rosary confraternities established everywhere.

23. *Lourdes and the Rosary.* Apparition of our Lady and the rosary. Church of the Rosary. Rosary recited by pilgrims.

24. *The Rosary and our joys.* Consider the joyful mysteries, applying each to the individual, the family and society.

25. *The Rosary and our sorrows.* Consider the sorrowful mysteries, applying each to the individual, the family and society.

26. *The Rosary and our hopes.* Consider the glorious mysteries, applying each to the individual, the family and society.

27. *The Rosary and Holy Mass.* One is the great prayer, the other the great sacrifice. Both contain most beautiful prayers and petitions taught by God. Both tend to our sanctification, upon which our salvation depends.

28. *The Rosary and penance.* Happiness of a good Catholic; examination of conscience. Sorrows of a sinner; contrition. Glory of one who is converted and fervent; good resolutions.

29. *The Rosary and the Holy Eucharist.* The Joyful Mysteries, preparation. The Sorrowful Mysteries, unworthiness even of the best persons. The Glorious Mysteries, fervent thanksgiving.

30. *The Rosary and Catholic Faith.* It contains the chief articles of faith; reminds us of our duties; and encourages us to practice most perfect virtues.

31. *The Rosary and Heaven.* The prayers of the Rosary were inspired from above. All the mysteries promote our sanctification, and the servants of our Lady do honor to her in heaven.

FEASTS OF OUR LADY IN EACH MONTH

In each month some day is dedicated to our Lady; let us here make a brief survey of them; we shall consider them elsewhere at greater length.

January. The 23rd. **The Espousals of the Blessed Virgin.** This is not a feast of obligation for the whole Church; it is celebrated only in those dioceses which have obtained permission to observe it, and the Office for it occurs in the supplement to the Breviary. The feast is kept by the Dominican Order on February 11th. Our Lady's marriage with St. Joseph furnishes Christians with a great example and model of sanctification.

February. The 2nd. **The Purification.** Every Jewish mother had to visit the Temple 40 days after the birth of a son, and 80 days after that of a daughter, and the firstborn child was re-

quired to be redeemed by means of a lamb and a dove, or two doves, in memory of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. This ceremony was the origin of our Churching. Mary is the model for Christian mothers to copy. Humble yourselves and pray that your children may grow up to be faithful followers of the divine Child. This festival is often called Candlemas, because blessed candles are lighted at the procession, and afterwards are kept by the faithful to be lighted during storms, when the sacraments are administered to the sick, etc. The Purification was observed in primitive times, for St. Jerome, writing in the 4th Century, speaks of it as already very ancient. The ceremony of churching women after childbirth goes back to the same date.

March. The 25th. **The Annunciation.** The archangel Gabriel was sent by God to announce to Mary the Incarnation of the divine Word. This was strictly speaking the first stage in the work of our redemption. Let us thank her for her *Fiat!* This festival certainly existed in the 5th Century, since mention is made of it in the Sacramentary of St. Gregory the Great. It should be celebrated on March 25th, but when it coincides with Palm Sunday, or falls in either Holy or Easter Week, it is transferred to the Monday after Low Sunday.

April. Palm Sunday generally comes in April, and the Friday preceding it is kept as **the festival of our Lady of Compassion;** it occurs again in September, when it is called the feast of the Seven Dolours. It was founded by the 11th canon of the Council of Cologne, 1423.

May. Owing to the Ascension and Pentecost, there used to be no special festival in May, but the whole month is dedicated to our Lady, and more recently Pope Pius VI assigned the feast of **Our Lady Help of Christians** to the 24th.

June. In the Roman Breviary no feast occurs. June follows immediately upon the Month of Mary, and contains the feasts of Corpus Christi, St. John and St. Peter. Some religious Orders, however, keep the feast of the **Most Pure Heart of Mary** as a greater double on the Sunday following the Octave of Trinity Sunday.

July 2nd. **The Visitation.** In the Dominican Breviary this

feast has a simple octave. On this day Mary was inspired to compose the Magnificat. The institution of the festival is ascribed to St. Bonaventure, who made it obligatory throughout his Order. Urban XI extended it to the whole Church in 1379. The Council of Bâle (1431) assigned it to July 2nd. Its vigil was formerly a fasting day.

In July we celebrate St. Anne, our Lady's Mother.

August 15th. Death and **Assumption of Mary.** Until the 5th Century this festival was observed on various dates, but about the year 600 the Sacramentary of St. Gregory the Great fixed it on August 15th. Hence it has been observed on that date for over 1300 years. The feast of St. Joachim, our Lady's father, falls on the Sunday following the Assumption, and that of the **Most Pure Heart of Mary** on the Sunday after. (Roman Breviary.)

September 8th. **The Nativity of our Lady.** St. Augustine mentions only the birthdays of our Lord and St. John the Baptist; nor does the Council of Mayence (813) allude to this feast, which had, however, been instituted by Pope Sergius I in 687. The Orientals, although schismatics, adopted it in the 12th Century, and the general Council of Lyons, in 1245, ordered it to be celebrated with an octave. On the Sunday next after the 8th is the feast of the **Holy Name of Mary,** which was kept originally only in a few dioceses, but after the victory over the Turks at Vienna, Innocent XI extended it to the whole Church.

October. The first Sunday is **Rosary Sunday,** on the second we celebrate our Lady's Maternity, on the third her Purity, and on the fourth her Patronage.

November. On the second Sunday in some dioceses is celebrated the feast of **our Lady's Patronage,** instead of on the fourth Sunday of October.

On the 21st, the **Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.** According to some authorities the Eastern Church observed this feast as early as the 9th Century, but, according to others, not until the 12th. It was adopted in the Western Church by a bull issued by Gregory XI on November 21st, 1372. At

that time the office was the same as for our Lady's Nativity; the office now in use dates from the time of Clement VII.

December 10th. **Translation of the Holy House of Loreto.** This is the house where our Lady dwelt at Nazareth, whence it was carried by angels to Dalmatia and afterwards to Loreto, in the pontificate of St. Celestine V. The feast was instituted by Innocent XII. The Holy House, fitted up as a chapel, stands within a large, magnificent church, built to protect it.

18th. **The Expectation.** Just a week before Christmas the birth of the divine Child was expected, so there is an octave of preparation. The Circumcision is celebrated on the octave day after Christmas. At the first Vespers of the Expectation the great Christmas Antiphons begin. (O.) In 636 the Council of Toledo celebrated the Annunciation, instead of the Expectation.

THE SCAPULARS

"Thou shalt put on them the holy vestments, that they may minister to me."—Exod. xl. 13.

These words were addressed by God to Moses regarding the sons of Aaron. We may think of our Lady as addressing them to Holy Church, regarding her faithful servants.

The scapulars are holy vestments. Let us consider some of them more particularly.

The word *scapular* is derived from the Latin *scapulae,* shoulders. From the earliest times monks have worn this garment, which covers the shoulders and reaches to the knees, and consists of two strips of cloth. It protected the monastic habit whilst manual work was performed, but afterwards it became a distinctive mark of the various Orders, or, in one and the same Order, it distinguished Choir religious from lay brothers. A scapular is invariably blessed, and indulgences are granted to any one who kisses it devoutly. A religious never parts with his scapular. B. Reginald of Orleans had a visin in which our Lady showed him the Dominican scapular (1220). She gave St. Simon Stock the Carmelite scapular in 1251.

1. **The brown Carmelite Scapular** was worn first by religious, and afterwards by the faithful. Bull (disputed) of John XXII, a French pope (1316-1334); Bull of Clement VII (1523-1534). This is the most widely spread scapular. It should not be worn across the shoulders, as some people suppose, but on the chest and back, with the cords on the shoulders. Our Lady promised St. Simon Stock that it should be a mark of salvation, a safeguard in danger, and a pledge of special protection. Those who wear the scapular belong to the Contraternity of our Lady of Mount Carmel whose festival is celebrated on July 16th. The Office was approved by Sixtus V, and many indulgences are attached to the scapular.

2. **The blue Scapular of the Immaculate Conception.** Our Lady appeared in a vision to the Ven. Ursula Benincasa, foundress of the Theatines, at Naples. St. Philip Neri held this holy religious in great esteem, and Pius VI pronounced her virtues heroic (Decree dated August 7th, 1793). She frequently fell into ecstasies. This particular vision occurred on the feast of the Purification, and, in consequence of it, she built a convent dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, and was told to give the 33 nuns there a blue scapular, resembling some shown her by angels. This scapular was approved by Clement X and Clement XI, who attached indulgences to it, which were subsequently confirmed by Gregory XVI (July 12th, 1845) and Pius IX (June 7th, 1850 and March 21st, 1857).

3. **The red Scapular of the Passion and of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.** On the octave day of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul (July 26th, 1846) a sister of Charity had a vision of our Lord. Eighteen months earlier she had seen a similar vision, and on the following Sept. 14th Our Lord appeared to her a third time with a red scapular. On June 25th, 1847, Pius IX issued a rescript conferring upon the Lazarists the right to bless and distribute similar scapulars, and on March 25th, 1848, they received the right to grant the same privilege to priests not belonging to their congregation. In this scapular the two pieces of cloth and the cord joining them must all be red. One piece bears a representation of our Lord on the Cross, the other shows the two Sacred Hearts.

Many indulgences have been attached to this scapular; a plenary indulgence every Friday if the wearer receives Holy Communion; if not, an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines, provided that he says the *Pater, Ave,* and *Gloria* five times.

4. **The Scapular of our Lady of Dolors.** This scapular belongs to the Servite Order, founded at Florence in the 13th Century by seven citizens, who entered religion, and took the rule of St. Augustine. Their habit was black, with a black scapular and cloak. This Order uses a special chaplet commemorating the Seven Dolors.

5. **The Scapular of our Lady of Mercy** belongs to the Order of the same name, our Lady of Mercy or Ransom, for the redemption of Christians taken captive by the Mussulmans. It was founded in 1223 at Barcelona in Spain, by St. Peter of Nola, with the assistance of St. Raymond of Pennafort and James I, King of Aragon, to both of whom our Lady had appeared. It was not long before Pope Gregory IX formally approved of the Order and its scapular.

Peroration. We have considered a few of the forms assumed by devotion to Mary, which involve wearing a distinctive garment. The world has its uniforms, robes and liveries . . . we may well wear such as servants of our Lady, but interior piety must underlie the outward badge, just as the soul must inspire the body, which without it is a corpse. Like God, Mary beholdeth the heart (1 Kings xvi. 7).

FEASTS OF THE SAINTS

ST. JOSEPH

"Joseph, the husband of Mary."—MATT. i. 16.

St. Bernard says of him that he was: *Nobilis genere, mente nobilior.* Three points:

I. **A descendant of David.** The divine Word humbled Himself, but even in the estimation of men the house of Joseph and Mary possessed a certain dignity. It was an honor to be descended from David, and the greatness of the Holy Family was real, though veiled. In several passages in the Gospels our Lord is called "Son of David," and the angel had used the same expression, therefore both Joseph and Mary were descended from David.

II. **St. Joseph's genealogy.** Adam is the father of all mankind, but certain races and families are rendered particularly noble by their virtues or by the choice of God. In law a wife takes her hubsand's rank, but Joseph and Mary were of the same race, and Joseph shared with Mary the task of protecting the divine Child. God bestowed great privileges upon both.

III. **Emblems of St. Joseph.** Kings, nobles and saints have emblems, coats of arms, striking badges. St. Peter holds two keys, the martyrs often are represented with the instruments of their martyrdom; St. Lawrence with a gridiron, St. Catherine with a wheel. St. Joseph holds a lily, which, by its purity is a type of our Lady and the divine Child. "Take the Child and His Mother" (Matt. ii. 20).

ST. JOSEPH, FOSTERFATHER OF JESUS CHRIST

"The angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, Son of David, fear not." (Matt. i. 20.)

I. **St. Joseph, the fosterfather.** St. Luke, in speaking of our Lord, says that He was "as it was supposed, the son of Joseph" (Luke iii. 23). St. Joseph was a man according to God's own heart (1 Kings xiii. 14); working to feed and provide for the divine Child. On the day of judgment: "I was hungry," "I was thirsty." Aged Simeon and Anna at the Presentation. The angels, after the forty days' fast in the desert; many saints have held Him in their arms, but St. Joseph supported Him for thirty years.

II. **St. Joseph, the protector.** He was a big-hearted man, chosen by God to guard His Son here below, and to be the spouse of the Immaculate Mother. St. John the Baptist pointed out the Messias to his followers, but St. Joseph lived with Him for thirty years; at Bethlehem, in Egypt and at Nazareth he was His protector.

III. **St. Joseph obeyed by the divine Child.** "He was subject to them" (Luke ii. 51). In the order of nature, children obey their parents, but God is subject to no one, yet He humbled Himself before Jesus and Mary. In this did St. Joseph's dignity consist. St. Teresa used to obtain everything through him, who now prays to our Lord for us.

Peroration. Long ago our divine Lord, the Bread of heaven and food of our souls, used to obey St. Joseph; now He obeys the priest at the altar. A good Communion on this festival.

St. Joseph's Holiness

"Joseph . . . being a just man."—Matt. i. 19.

Most of the saints occasionally show imperfections, but St. Joseph was always just in God's sight. There were three reasons for this sanctity.

I. **God's predestination.** God chose special men to perform exceptional tasks: Noe, Moses, Josue, Saul, David, Solomon, the prophets. . . . Joseph first saved Jesus, then directed the Holy Family, acted as our Lord's protector until He began His ministry; was chosen as belonging to His tribe and stands very close to Him, directing the true sanctuary, and being acquainted with God's designs.

II. **His Mission.** "Joseph is a growing son" (Gen. xlix. 22). Joseph the patriarch dwelt with his father, and afterwards with the king; St. Joseph lived with Jesus, the fount of all grace. Yes, "Of His fulness we have all received" (John i. 16) and St. Joseph most abundantly. The nearer we are to the fountain-head, the more we derive from it (St. Thomas, 3a p. qu. 27).

III. **Spouse of Mary.** Every husband benefits by having a good wife. What shall we say of one who was our Lady's spouse? He was most tenderly loved, most highly privileged by her intercession, and most richly endowed with divine graces Pius IX said to an artist: "Where have you put St. Joseph? Among the other saints? He ought to be nearer to our Lady." Gerson made a similar remark.

Three Chief Qualities

"The Lord hath sought Him a man according to His own heart."—1 Kings xiii. 14.

If we want to find men of talents, genius and noble character, let us not be misled by the talk of the world, but go straight to those whom God has chosen.

I. **St. Joseph sought God in all simplicity.** "The way of the just is right, and the path of the just is right to walk in" (Is. xxvi. 17). "Wisdom . . . conducted the just . . . through the right ways" (Wisd. x. 10). Joseph walked simply before God, keeping watch over his thoughts, intentions and desires. "If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome" (Luke xi. 34). He had a most responsible task to perform, to guard our Lady and bring up and protect the divine Child. His heart was docile. The shepherds and the Magi came in consequence of a miracle, and he, too, walked by the light of obedience; it was enough for him to have faith in his mission.

II. **St. Joseph found God, by way of detachment.** Gentle emotions are pleasant and permanent, violent passion carries us away, but both alike entangle our hearts. St. Joseph practiced detachment, forgot his own interests and listened to the

angel; Jesus was with him. Let us, too, walk always in God's sight.

III. **St. Joseph enjoyed God in retirement.** The world loves display and splendor, but St. Joseph lived an interior life. A man's reputation enables him, after his death, as it were, to prolong his existence in this world, but how can our praise or disdain affect him when he is dead? St. Paul says: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14). We ought to die to the world. St. Joseph led a quiet life, thinking only of Christ. "His father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him" (Luke ii. 33). They knew Him better than anyone else. Let us not try to unite the Gospel and the world; a plant uprooted shrivels and dies; let us fear lest this should happen to our souls. God readeth the heart and will reward us.

Three Treasures Entrusted to St. Joseph

"Keep that which is committed to thy trust."—1 Tim. vi. 20.

Without St. Joseph, the guardian of Jesus and Mary, how could the preparation for our redemption have been effected? Three treasures were given him to guard; 1. Our Lady's Virginity, 2. Our Lord's Person, 3. The mystery of the Incarnation.

1. **Our Lady's Virginity.** Virginity is a virtue dear to God and the angels; virgins, says St. Augustine, already possess in their flesh something that is not of flesh. Our souls must leave their bodies to decay in the tomb.

In marriage there is a contract of mutual fidelity, conjugal love, and a resulting family. In the case of Mary and Joseph, however, the contract was a triumph of purity, their love was supernatural, and the Incarnate Word was its divine fruit.

II. **The Person of Jesus Christ.** He was the Word that came down from heaven, and was born of the Virgin Mary. St. Joseph was not, humanly speaking, His Father, but watched over Him tenderly, carefully and diligently. St. Joseph's heart was fashioned directly by God, who in certain cases has acted in a special manner upon the hearts of men (Ps. 37; 1 Kings

x. 9 and 26). Our Lord's heart was full of filial affection for him. St. Joseph guarded his treasure faithfully. One who had no cross to bear could hardly understand Jesus, but Joseph was always at hand, guarding Him against Herod; in Egypt and at Jerusalem. "We sought thee sorrowing." Do we, weak, worldly creatures, show devotion like St. Joseph's, when our Lord is lost or persecuted?

III. **The Mystery of the Incarnation.** Our Lord's hidden life was passed under St. Joseph's protection. The Gospel records no details of it, and earth took no interest in it. Why was this so? The proud like to make a display, and shrink from showing themselves to be Catholics, but Jesus shunned all ostentation. Picture the conversations at Nazareth! Our Lord is still hidden. Nations fail to acknowledge Him, the law sets Him aside, His religion is insulted. But pious souls find Him in prayer at church, in the tabernacle, and their good works console Him. Let us pity the sinful world, and turn to Jesus.

Peroration. Like St. Joseph let us, in all our work and responsibilities, walk in God's sight. Like St. Paul, he says to us: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16).

Outlines of Other Sermons on St. Joseph

I. *"He that is the keeper of his master shall be glorified"* (Prov. xxvii. 18). "A faithful man shall be much praised" (Prov. xxviii. 20). Three points: St. Joseph, the workman; St. Joseph and the Holy Childhood; St. Joseph and the Church.

II. *St. Joseph's trade.* St. Matthew calls him a smith. St. Justin translates the word as "carpenter." St. Ambrose, St. Hilary, St. Peter Chrysologus call him a locksmith, smith. The exact date of his death is unknown, but it doubtless occurred shortly before our Lord began His active ministry, for people spoke of Him as the carpenter's son, not as son of the widow at Nazareth. St. Joseph's dignity was great in itself, he was our Lady's spouse, our Lord's fosterfather, and head of the Holy Family. In virtue of his exalted office he stands above all the other saints who made Christ known to

the world. His sanctity was perfect in virtue of his office, great in virtue of the justice that filled his soul, and proved by the many qualities that circumstances required him to display. He was impeccable, both by predestination and on account of his office.

III. *Pious Considerations.* In St. Joseph: his prerogatives and sacred rights; his holy and glorious duties, his truly sublime virtues. Let us learn from him to work under the eye of God; to love Jesus; to lead a holy life; to suffer and die in the company of Jesus Christ. Let us ask St. Joseph to intercede for us, and put great confidence in him.

Note. For a panegyric some of the preceding outline sermons may be taken together, according to the following scheme:

a. **St. Joseph's personality.** His rank as a descendant from David; his distinguished genealogy; his emblems.

b. **St. Joseph's office.** Fosterfather and guardian of Christ; obeyed by the divine Child.

c. **Cultus of St. Joseph.** Reverence, love and submission on the part of Mary and Jesus. Devotion of the Church (Fathers, doctors, the liturgy). Devotion of the faithful (workmen, Catholics in general, and especially the dying).

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—Acts ix. 6.

These were St. Paul's first words to God. Let us consider the beginning, completeness and nature of his conversion.

I. **The beginning.** Three details are recorded: 1st. A bright light shone from heaven, which, as St. Augustine says, dazzled the eyes, but illumined the mind. So with us; grace makes us forget earth and look forward to heaven. "When his eyes were opened, he saw nothing." 2nd. He heard the voice of Christ asking: "Why persecutest thou me?" Grace enlightens, conscience reproaches. God speaks, and our hearts ought to listen. Let us not be more deaf to His voice than this converted persecutor. St. Lawrence Justinian remarks that with

a word Christ soothed Paul's fury, appeased his cruel anger, altered his plans, and reformed his character. 3d. He obeyed the call. Conversion is at once the work of God and man. "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you" (Zach. i. 3). "Convert us, O God our Saviour" (Ps. 84, 5). St. Paul was ready to obey. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He listened, went to Damascus, and there was visited by Ananias. We receive light through religion and the sacraments; we hear God's voice in the commandments, the Gospel and the Church. We can show obedience by sanctifying our life by means of prayer, Holy Communion, etc.

II. **The completeness of the Conversion.** It changed him from a wolf into a lamb. Jacob had called Benjamin "a ravenous wolf," and Paul belonged to that tribe. St. Augustine, in speaking of St. Stephen's martyrdom, says: *Christus Saulum in Paulum, lupum in agnum commutavit* (de Sanctis, hom. 14). It changed him from a persecutor into a preacher. In writing to the Corinthians and Galatians St. Paul states that he had persecuted the Church (1 Cor. xv. 19; Gal. i. 13). Later on He says: "I am appointed a preacher and an apostle" (1 Tim. ii. 7), and Christ Himself told Ananias that Saul was to carry His name to the Gentiles (Acts ix. 15).

It changed him from a Jew into an apostle of Christ. He said of himself: "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city . . . Suffer me to speak to the people" (Acts xxi. 39). "I am the least of the apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 9). It is stated that he preached Jesus in the synagogues (Acts ix. 20).

Is our conversion equally thorough?

III. **The nature of his Conversion.** "Thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed, as a young bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jer. xxxi, 18). St. Paul's conversion was better than that of others, for it was (1) absolutely sincere; he came back to God without reserve, willing to obey His laws, and saying: "Not my will, but thine be done." Good works, Communions, piety, prayer. (2) It was prompt. St. Paul went at once to Damascus, met Ananias in the name of Christ, and set about the work of converting others. Let us take to heart the warning: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer

it not from day to day" (Ecclus. v. 8). 3. It was effected once for all. A partial conversion does no good. "Vain is the repentance that is defiled at first by one fault, for a man who passes from sin to tears and from tears to sin, scarcely deserves forgiveness" (St. Augustine). Consider St. Paul, who abandoned sin once for all, and devoted himself to good works.

As St. Bernard says, his conversion made St. Paul an angel on earth, a man fit for heaven, zealous beyond comparison.

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

"I am appointed . . . a doctor of the gentiles in faith and truth."—1 Tim. ii. 7.

Apostles and preachers are doctors, taking the Gospel as the basis of their teaching on the faith and truth.

Let us consider St. Francis of Sales as a doctor of the Church.

I. In his book on canonization Benedict XIV mentions **three qualities which every doctor of the Church must possess.**

1. Eminent learning, because he has to unmask vice, spread the faith and inculcate morality.

2. Remarkable sanctity, because he must follow Christ crucified, practice exalted virtue, and obey the pure light of the Holy Spirit.

3. The approbation of the Church. The request for the bestowal of the title is made by the bishops; it is investigated by the Congregation of Rites, and, if the saint's works are found to be orthodox, the Pope decrees the use of the title of Doctor. It was conferred on St. Francis of Sales on Nov. 16th, 1877.

Did he possess all the necessary requirements? Yes; he studied a great deal, sanctified himself and converted others, and by his writings added glory to the Church.

II. **Three reasons why he was declared to be a Doctor of the Church.**

1. He was a learned controversialist. In 1594 he went as missioner to Chablais, taking with him Bellarmine's book on controversy. He preached at Thonon and then wrote a book

on controversy against heretics who refused to listen to the mission. His work, "The Standard of the Holy Cross," is on the Real Presence and the Apostles' Creed. He succeeded in converting 72,000 heretics.

2. He was a skilful exponent of dogma. The Sorbonne placed him just below the four great doctors; Paul V invited him to join the Congregation *De Auxiliis,* and he wrote an important treatise on the Love of God, in which he shows that the will is supreme over our other faculties, but love governs the will; therefore love of God ought to prevail over everything. He explains how this love arises in us, its growth, perfection and decadence.

3. He was a great teacher of asceticism. Souls have a threefold life, Christian, devout, mystical. He lays down principles firmly, but is gentle in applying them. He was the author of many ascetical works, the best known of which is the "Introduction to the Devout Life." He wrote over 900 letters which are in themselves short treatises, the Constitutions of the Visitation Order, Spiritual discourses, etc. Henry IV used to say of him: "I respect him, because my favors have never tempted him, and I love him, because his advice has never been flattering to me."

ST. MATTHIAS

"The lot fell upon Matthias."—Acts i. 26.

Three points: election, prerogatives, labors.

I. Election. Treachery of Judas, loyalty of Matthias. Likewise in heaven, fall of the bad angels, whilst the good were confirmed in grace. It formed part of the designs of Providence that Matthias should be called; the apostles gave their votes, he was a disciple. "Friend, go up higher." He was a man of conspicuous merit. God guided the lots, in answer to prayer. St. Peter quotes from Ps. 108, 8: "His bishopric let another take." As Bellarmine remarks, Matthias was most unlike Judas. Many ambitious men, though quite unworthy, attain their end by wicked ways.

II. Prerogatives. St. Matthias asked nothing and received everything. 1st. The honor of being an apostle. In the Breviary the apostles are called: *Ecclesiarum principes, Belli triumphales duces* . . . etc. They were judges, princes, preachers and the salt of the earth. 2d. The graces of Christ. Although St. Matthias was a laborer called at the eleventh hour, the graces that he received bore fruit; he brought many pagans to Christ as disciples; Judas led men to Him as His executioners. 3. The crown of immortality. A throne of glory was promised to Judas as well as to the other eleven; he forfeited all right to it, and St. Matthias received it, and became one of the pillars in the temple of God (Apoc. iii. 12).

III. **Labors.** Judas went to the Jews, and made himself the tool of the Pharisees. God sent forth His Son, who in His turn sent forth the apostles. St. Matthias preached diligently in Judea and Ethiopia. He came from Jesus: *Sed qui vocatur a Deo* . . . He obeyed and exercised his ministry, was fearless in making known the Gospel, and he healed the blind and those possessed by devils. He proclaimed that it was a glory to be a Christian; he was seized and required to deny his faith, which he indignantly refused to do. He silenced the leaders of the people, resisted Ananias, the high priest, and acknowledged Christ, whereupon he was condemned to be stoned. The Romans, however, disapproved of the sentence, cancelled the stoning and beheaded the apostle.

Peroration. The rejection of Judas ought to inspire good people with fear of falling away from grace; the election of St. Matthias should be an encouragement to converts to persevere.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

"Of his fulness we have all received."—JOHN i. 16.

On August 4th, 1880, Leo XIII declared St. Thomas to be the patron of Catholic schools. He is the glory of the Dominican Order and of the whole Church, a master of doctrine and of preaching, and the prince of theologians. Three points: learning, truth, sanctity.

I. **Learning.** His knowledge embraced all subjects. John XXII called him the Doctor of Doctors. He fathomed the learning of all his predecessors, as it is written: "The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients" (Ecclus. xxxix. 1). Of his works the same Pope remarks that they contain as many miracles as sections. Men only partially wise attempt to discuss various topics in a confused way, but St. Thomas on the contrary: *Singulari ordine, mira perspicuitate, sine ullo prorsus errore conscripsit* (Clement VIII). He is represented with a sun shining on his breast.

His learning was profound. *Deus scientiarum Dominus* (1 Kings ii. 3). He went so far as to penetrate the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, of which no man ever spoke better than he. *Scientia inflat,* but he spoke and wrote with humility, beginning his sentences with the words: "It seems." His learning is of inestimable value. Paul V calls him the "Shield of the Church," and he is a guide and safeguard to theologians, controversialists and Christian politicians.

II. **Truth.** The Order of St. Dominic, to which St. Thomas belonged, is the *Ordo veritatis.* He was enamored of truth. From the tabernacle our Lord said to him: "Well hast thou written of me, Thomas." Nothing would have made him forsake the truth. Alexander VII remarked that the sun of truth cast its light on all the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. He was a master of truth. St. Peter is called the mouthpiece of the apostles, and the Church describes St. Thomas as *Fons doctorum.* Leo XIII recommended his writings. He was the protector of truth against pagans, false systems of philosophy and heretics. Bucer, a Protestant writer, said: *Tolle Thomam, et dissipabo Ecclesiam.* His works sum up the teaching of all the Fathers, are the support of the Church, and are consulted by Councils and theologians. Even his opinions have weight.

III. **Sanctity.** St. Thomas showed his holiness as a preacher; he was one of the Friars Preachers, and his writings contain the same doctrine as his sermons. He preached virtue, penance, good works. He was a man of prayer, and his first book was the crucifix. He learnt less from study than through

prayer. Sometimes he fell into ecstasy, and did not feel pain when his fingers were burnt with a lighted taper.

Before he entered religion he used to pray and struggle, and was visited by angels. As a friar he practiced many mortifications, obeyed his superiors, studied, preached, and went forward from virtue to virtue. His sanctity increased, and he worked miracles. There was a dispute regarding his tomb, but after a century his relics were restored to his Order.

ST. GABRIEL

"The Angel Gabriel was sent from God."—Luke i. 26.

Gabriel, *fortitudo Dei,* the angel of the Incarnation.

I. **In heaven.** God, foreseeing original sin and desiring the redemption of mankind, decreed the Incarnation. Lucifer desired to be the Redeemer. "I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (Is. xiv. 14). But God set aside angelic and chose human nature. *Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis* (Ps. viii. 6). Gabriel, the strength of God, was the archangel sent to announce the Redeemer's birth. "Let all the angels of God adore Him" (Hebr. i. 6). Lucifer rebelled: "I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). Michael, *Quis ut Deus?*

II. **Under the ancient law.** Gabriel appeared to Daniel and explained his vision (Dan. vii. 15–21), and afterwards revealed to him the date of Christ's birth (ix. 20–27). In several instances where Jehovah is said to have appeared to the Israelites, we may believe that Gabriel was seen acting in the name of God.

III. **In St. Luke's Gospel.** Gabriel appeared to Zachary to announce the birth of St. John the Baptist; to our Lady at the Incarnation, to the shepherds at our Lord's birth, three times to St. Joseph, and to our Lord in Gethsemani.

Peroration. The Incarnation is a dominant fact in heaven and in earth. Gabriel's mission reveals the strength of God. His greeting to Mary resounds over the whole of Christianity.

ST. PATRICK

No saint has left deeper trace in memory of land he evangelized than St. Patrick. Elsewhere, patron saints often the shadow of a name; but in Ireland, Patrick a living force. Races judged by their ideals, i.e., their real, working beliefs. He seems to have, under God, fixed those of Ireland forever. Unshaken tenacity to the faith for upward of fifteen centuries proves this.

Whence the influence he wielded and still wields over Irish race? The secret hereof appears to lie in this:

I. **He first sanctified himself,** i.e., did God's work in his own soul.

II. **He was thus equipped and fitted to do God's work effectually** in the souls of others.

1. (a) Two marked features characterized his spirit and made him a strong man spiritually—prayer and penance. The great instruments of holiness to all, but to him specially. Circumstances under which he first appears in history. Hindrances to piety and even belief in God. Prayer in his case a spur and a safeguard. (b) Penance. Why needed. World and man out of joint with self and God. Height of asceticism to which our saint rose. Need for all. No hindrance to his work for others.

2. (a) Work for others. The field. Soil good and ready for Seed of Word. State of Ireland on his coming. Soul of it "naturally Christian." (b) His mission a triumphant march. Work, though rapid, yet solid. Clergy and Monastic life. His work endures. Seems to have transmitted his spirit to his people.

Conclusion.—Exhort to unity in civil as in religious affairs. Hopes and prospects. Practical lessons impressed by thought of St. Patrick's life.

Alternative Plan

St. Patrick

St. Patrick's day more than the festival of a saint. It is the festival of a nation. It is the festival of this nation's pure Catholic faith. We have before us to-day the long struggle of Ireland for the faith, the glorious service it rendered for the faith. For three centuries Ireland was the great missionary of the faith to barbarian people; for three hundred years its martyr. Robbed of her lands, of her treasures of art, learning and religion by a tyrannical government, her grandest churches spoiled, her noble institutions of learning confiscated or destroyed, her work of education thwarted, fettered and obstructed in every way, and then taunted with being poor, Ireland bears a striking resemblance to the faith of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is now more than 1400 years since St. Patrick passed from earth to heaven and Ireland's faith has not failed yet. Cardinal Newman's words: "While the old world is passing away with its wealth and its wisdom, Ireland is the storehouse of the past and the birthplace of future civilization." St. Patrick's first care was to found schools and seminaries, and thus build up a generation of Catholics competent to hold and spread the truth. Thus Ireland became the university of Europe. Then Ireland won the peerless title "The isle of saints and the land of scholars." From Ireland went forth the missionaries that preached the Gospel in Germany, England and France, yes, as far as lower Italy, at the peril of their lives. Such was Ireland in the full blaze of her glory, and such her faith has made her, not a commercial nation but an apostolic one. It is a view to human eyes sad and gloomy, but to the eyes of the faith no less glorious than the other. And the contemplation of Ireland in her sad days of trial and suffering, as she stands out on the page of history hated and pursued to death for Christ's sake by wicked men, excites in our soul not only feelings of regret and compassion but feelings of admiration, joy and triumph. I shall not har-

row your soul on this festive day by detailing the atrocities she suffered. Suffice it to say that St. Patrick's prayer prevailed. Look at Ireland triumphant to-day, triumphant and strong in the ancient faith and love, still stronger abroad where her sons are building up the Church of God in English-speaking nations. It was the virtue of the Irish people that kept the faith strong and may the memory of their suffering sustain us in every trial and may our glorious patron continue to pray for us, that we by our pious lives may confirm in the faith of our brethren.

ST. BENEDICT

"I am become unto many as a wonder."—Ps. 70, 7.

Three points, solitude, the cloister, the Church.

I. **In solitude,** a marvel of penance: St. Benedict withdrew from the world to a sort of cavern, where he was, as it were, buried alive; he fasted continually, and his spirit of penance constrained him to roll on brambles and thorns. He shrank from no form of suffering.

II. **In the cloister,** a marvel of wisdom. The fame of his sanctity spread, and people came to join him. This was the beginning of his cenobitic life. St. Benedict had to lay down a monastic rule, which led to the foundation of an Order, and then religious houses had to be established.

Regarding the monastery at Cluny, founded in 910, Peter the Venerable says: *Publicum reipublicæ christianæ aerarium, imperatorum, regum, principum, et aliorum nobilium donis et liberalitatibus congregatum* (*Lib.* v. *ep.* 34). Regarding that at Moissac: *Abbatia mille monachorum.* Génebrard tells us that there were 50,000 houses or monasteries belonging to the Order.

St. Brigid tells us that he drew up his rule under divine inspiration. Monastic houses existed before his time, but all the earlier rules were set aside in favor of St. Benedict's (St. Antoninus, 2d p. tit. 15. ch. 12).

III. **In the Church,** a marvel of sanctity. His holiness showed itself in virtues of every kind, and was proved by fre-

quent remarkable miracles, and by his knowledge of the most difficult matters.

St. Gregory says that Benedict was filled with the spirit of all the just. St. Benedict's miracles resemble those of Moses, Elias, Eliseus and St. Peter. By making the Sign of the Cross he broke a cup of poison; from a stolen vessel a snake emerged; he pointed out the person guilty of preparing poisoned bread and wine; he detected the trick of Totila's servant, who dressed himself in his master's clothes, etc.

Peroration. St. Bernard says: "Great as he was on earth through the wonderful graces which God bestowed upon him, he is still greater in heaven, through the wonderful glory that he deserved."

ST. FRANCIS OF PAULA

"We will sing and praise Thy power."—Ps. xx. 14.

There are always saints possessed of heroic virtues; those that particularly characterize St. Francis are prudence, humility and steadfastness. He was austere, but not imprudent; famous but not vain, and unwavering in his fervor.

I. **Austerity and prudence.** As a youth, a full-grown man and an old man, he never hesitated to walk over ice, snow, stony paths and rugged mountains. He labored, fasted and mortified himself. The pagans extolled austerity. St. Paul says: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. ix. 27). "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 10).

He bids the Romans (xii. 1) present their bodies . . . unto God. "A reasonable service," and St. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on these words says that there must be no exaggeration, no shirking, but the just limit must be observed with prudence. (Give instances of imprudent and reckless mortification.)

II. **Fame and humility.** We must not always hide the good that is in us, but with all humility ascribe it to God. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good

works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). This was done by great saints who performed wonderful things, such as St. Benedict and St. Dominic.

St. Francis of Paula possessed conspicuous virtues, such as poverty, purity and charity, and was noted for them far beyond the walls of his monastery. He was admired by princes, nations and Popes. He foretold future events, explained very exalted truths and worked many miracles. He went into a hot furnace to repair it, removed a mountain to build a convent, with one of his monks crossed from Italy to Sicily on his cloak, which served as a boat; he drove out devils, raised the dead and restored sight to the blind. He was venerated by bishops and princes. He gave the religious of his Order the name of Minims. Glorious virtues, profound humility.

III. **Unwavering fervor.** St. Paul bade the Romans be "In carefulness not slothful, in spirit fervent" (xii. 11). Charity was the motive power during the whole life of St. Francis. Of him, as of St. Lawrence, it may be said that the fire which burnt outside, was less than that which raged inside him (St. Leo). He was fervent at his own home, in solitude, in the religious life and until death. This point is noticed in the bull of canonization. He knew that "he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10). He persevered not only for a time, but always, in prayer, the sacraments, a Christian life.

Peroration. Let us try to imitate his virtues, the austerity of his life, the edification that he afforded to his neighbors, and his fervor in the service of God.

ST. MARK

"Take Mark and bring him with thee."—2 TIM. iv. 11.

St. Mark was a bishop, St. Peter's disciple; he was an evangelist, who recorded his divine Master's teaching; he was a martyr, for he was put to death whilst preaching in Egypt.

I. **A bishop.** By birth a Hebrew of the tribe of Levi, bap-

tized by St. Peter, and sent to found the Church of Alexandria. He was a learned, holy and zealous man, and made many converts in Egypt, where he was the first to preach Christianity. In the book of Ezechiel and in the Apocalypse there are allusions to him as a roaring lion, so great was his zeal. Isaias foretold the conversion of "the city of the sun" (xix. 18). Alexandria is famous both in profance and ecclesiastical history. St. Mark spent nineteen years there, and converted each dwelling into a sort of religious house (Philo), so that he was there *princeps et institutor coenobitarum* (St. Jerome). Converts should be Christians in deed as well as in name, religious living in the world in their mode of life.

II. **Evangelist.** St. Mark wrote his Gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, using information supplied by St. Peter. St. Jerome and St. Clement of Alexandria call it a summary of St. Peter's discourses. Mark was the apostle's disciple and interpreter. Tertullian calls the Gospel according to St. Mark, St. Peter's Gospel, and that according to St. Luke St. Paul's. Like all the books of Holy Scripture, St. Mark's Gospel was inspired. Tertullian says that the writers of these books were "men flooded with the Holy Spirit," and Nicetas remarks: *Marcus scripsit, totus afflatus, totus fervidus Spiritu sancto.* Was he one of the 72 disciples? Perhaps not; he seems to have been converted later by St. Peter. He possessed all virtues and especially loved poverty, and gave away all that he had. He was very humble, and cut off his thumb, so that he might not be made a bishop, but was miraculously cured. He was so gentle, that as a preacher he resembled a lamb in the midst of wolves; he was patient and resigned when insulted, and a perfect model in every respect to his followers.

III. **Martyr.** He had accomplished an immense work, when one day, during the sacred mysteries, the pagans burst into his house, exclaiming: "Let us drag this calf to the slaughter." Metaphrastes says: "They applied the term 'calf' to this generous lion, this holy man, this zealous evangelist," and Nicetas tells us that, with a rope round his neck, he was dragged through the streets, mocked, beaten with sticks and stoned as he passed along. He had released men from their sins, from paganism and the

service of devils, but he was bruised, beaten until the ground was red with his blood, and cast into prison. God comforts those who are His, and even visits them. Our divine Lord appeared to St. Mark, saying: *Pax tibi, Marce, evangelista meus.* Finally the executioners seized, abused, and tortured him, and dragged him through a shower of stones and rocks, until he fell dead.

Peroration. St. Paul bade Timothy do the work of an evangelist. We too shall do it, if we keep the faith, observe the commandments, edify our neighbors, and live for Christ. In Venice there is a magnificent church dedicated to St. Mark. The arms of the city are a lion, and the motto the words addressed by our Lord to the evangelist.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

"He will give thee a heart."—Ecclus. vi. 37.

God alone weighs our merits, marks their degree and assigns their reward; but, if we may venture to judge the merit of the saints by their works and the favors bestowed on them in this world, we feel sure that many occupy a very high place in heaven. St. Catherine of Siena accomplished wonders for herself, her neighbor and the Church; God favored her greatly on earth, and she received from Him a heart that was detached, zealous and consecrated to His service.

I. **A detached heart,** possessing three special virtues. 1. It was devoid of all ignorance, full of profound wisdom. She resembled our Lord "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). St. Antoninus says that Christ used to speak to her by way of revelation and inspiration and sometimes by appearing to her. Many features in her life prove the truth of this assertion. She possessed also the gift of prophecy. 2. Her heart was devoid of all sin, and characterized by wonderful purity. She was never guilty of the smallest fault, and yet was full of the spirit of penance. At the age of seven she made a vow of virginity. When her sister tried to rouse a little vanity in her, she wept. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 50) was her prayer. Our

divine Lord "feedeth among the lilies" (Cant. vi. 2), and on one occasion, when, after enduring temptation, she cried: "Where wert Thou, O my God?" He repied: "I was hidden in the depths of thy heart" (St. Antoninus). Do our hearts turn to God when we are troubled? 3. Her heart was free from all attachment to earth, and rich in heavenly possessions.

Scientists of old used to say that Nature abhors a vacuum. Our hearts cannot remain empty; they must be filled either with heavenly or earthly affections. St. Catherine had learnt from St. Paul to seek the things which are above (Col. iii. 2), and so she enjoyed visions and ecstasies, that often lasted for hours after Holy Communion.

II. **A zealous heart.** Our Lord Himself declared that He had come to send fire on the earth. St. Catherine followed His example, and was full of zeal. Many are ready to speak against good Catholics, and St. Catherine encountered much opposition, first in her own home, and afterwards from those about her. At Siena she used to visit a woman suffering from leprosy, and cook her food, and in return she was insulted, mocked and slandered by her; nevertheless the saint persevered in waiting upon her. Our Lord set us an example of caring for the sick, and St. Catherine devoted herself to those afflicted with loathsome diseases, visiting them both at their homes and in the hospitals. Her charity and patience were unfailing, and she persevered, although her relatives and friends tried to make her give up this work. Her zeal for souls was boundless. She would gladly have barred the gate of hell with her own body, and her works of penance undoubtedly saved sinners from going thither. B. Raymond of Capua, her confessor, writes thus of her: "Who can say how many sinners she converted, how many worldly persons she brought back to the right way, how many who were tempted she rescued from Satan, how many good Christians she caused to grow in virtue?"

III. **A consecrated heart.** She practiced the highest virtues, especially humility, mortification and love of God. Humility is the foundation, support and crown of sanctity. Christ humbled Himself to the manger and the cross, and St. Catherine

sought out humiliations, the most lowly tasks and even ridicule. She prayed that her ecstasies and the stigmata might not be visible. So our Lord on Thabor ordered the apostles to tell no one what they had seen. St. Catherine suffered pain, did penance, sometimes for years eating nothing but vegetables. She wore an iron girdle round her loins, scourged herself for an hour daily, endured many trials and much ridicule, wore a crown of thorns under her veil, and made long meditations every night.

St. Catherine was the holocaust; think of her heroism, her labors and good works in God's service; her whole life was spent in them. *Holocausta medullata offeram tibi* (Ps. 65). Everything was for God and His glory, the Church and the salvation of souls.

Peroration. St. Catherine's life was wonderful, holy, and completely dedicated to God. Her heart was full of divine wisdom and zeal for souls. O great daughter of St. Dominic, patron of the Third Order, pray for us.

ST. JOAN OF ARC

"Thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened . . . therefore also the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and thou shalt be blessed for ever."—JUDITH XV. 11.

What wonderful words! To whom were they addressed? Not to Alexander, or Caesar, or any other famous conqueror . . . 2600 years ago Nabuchodonosor sent Holofernes to devastate Syria, and the Israelites alone resisted him. Palestine was on the point of being conquered when Judith, after praying to God, went to Holofernes and cut off his head, thus saving her country. Joachim, the high priest, went from Jerusalem to Bethulia to see her, and he and the ancients with him blessed her, saying: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people. For thou hast done manfully . . . thou shalt be blessed for ever."

At the beginning of the 15th Century France was torn by party spirit, and the enemy was everywhere victorious, until God sent a deliverer . . . For 500 years she has been forgotten,

disliked, neglected, but now in the 20th Century Rome has spoken solemnly, and the Judith of Domrémy will be for ever blessed and honored.

Three points: her call, her task, her death.

I. **Her call.** On Feb. 22d, 1403, Charles VII of France was born, and on Jan. 6th, 1412, the humble maiden who was to deliver her country. The reigning sovereign was wanting in political insight. The princes and nobles were divided into various factions, and the English, after their victory at Agincourt in 1415 had won over to their side the Normans, Bretons and Burgundians, and forced the king to retire to Bourges, whereupon the King of England assumed the reins of government. It was then that God intervened. Joan of Arc, being thirteen years of age, and living at Domrémy, begin to hear heavenly voices urging her to go and deliver France, and cause the king to be crowned. During five years she heard the voices of St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret, all repeating the same message. She told her uncle, who took her to Baudricourt, where the Sire de Vaucouleurs was at first incredulous, though he afterwards gave her an escort and sent her to Charles VII at Chinon (February, 1429). She underwent many dangers on the way, but was full of confidence, and on March 9th had an audience with the king. He had hidden himself among his courtiers, but Joan went straight up to him, spoke of his secret troubles and encouraged him. At Chinon and at Poitiers she was examined by learned men, who even asked her to work a miracle; her invariable request was to be sent to Orleans.

II. **Her task.** People at last believed in her, as the last resource of the uncrowned king. Clad in armor and carrying her banner and a sword, she reached Blois on April 24th, addressed the soldiers, and set out for Orleans to the strains of the *Veni Creator*. Although the English had ten forts round the city, she succeeded in re-victualling it without their knowledge, and herself entered Orleans on April 28th. On May 4th a troop of 500 men came up, and there was fierce fighting for three hours. Joan, warned by her "Voices," hurried up and was victorious. A *Te Deum* was sung in all the churches. May 5th being Ascen-

sion day, fighting was forbidden, but on the 6th she crossed the river by a ford that was not guarded. The English fled and took refuge in a fort. Joan set up her standard on the edge of the rampart; she was wounded in the foot, but rushed on the enemy and the fort was taken. "To-morrow," she said, "will be a triumph for us."

On the 7th at daybreak she crossed the river and attacked another fort. There was a long struggle, and her men were exhausted, as she began to raise a scaling ladder, an arrow pierced her shoulder. However, her Voices gave her fresh courage, she planted her banner on the embankment of the fort, drove back the enemy and forced an entrance. On the 8th at daybreak she ordered two Masses to be said in the open air; the English at a distance remained inactive and after a while retreated, and Joan conducted a procession of soldiers and townsfolk to visit the churches in Orleans. In a week she had broken down the iron circle of the forts and raised the siege.

Joan then rejoined the king at Tours, and urged him to set out for Rheims; she herself went back to Orleans, and took a number of towns from the English, then made her way to Rheims, where Charles VII was crowned on July 17th.

III. **Her death.** After her task was accomplished, came the sacrifice. Many more towns surrendered or were taken, but the king was unwilling to advance upon Paris, and visited various other places; however, after Joan had broken her sword at St. Denis, he went forward, and Joan was again wounded. At Lagny she raised a dead child to life; at Melun her Voices warned her that she would shortly be betrayed. The Burgundians were then besieging Compiègne, and the governor of the town persuaded Joan to make a sortie; her soldiers fought well, but were outnumbered and forced to retreat. Joan continued to fight, but the gates were shut, and she was taken prisoner on May 23d. She was taken from place to place, sold to the English, brought in chains to Rouen, and shut up in an iron cage. Her judge was a scoundrel, who had been driven out of Beauvais and had no jurisdiction in Rouen. Her trial was a series of falsehoods, but she was sustained by her Voices,

bidding her submit quietly and not be troubled, because her martyrdom would admit her to Paradise.

May 30th, 1431, was the date fixed for her execution. Two Dominicans came to prepare her for death and obtained permission to give her Holy Communion. She was brought from her prison to the Old Market, where a platform had been erected for the judges, and wood prepared to burn her. After her sentence had been read, Joan prayed, then she was fastened to the stake. She asked for a crucifix, declared that her Voices came from God, bowed her head, after once more crying out: "Jesus," and died. Twenty-five years later the sentence was cancelled by the Bishops at Rheims, and she was pronounced innocent by the Pope. After the lapse of 500 years her cause was investigated by Pius IX and Leo XIII; she was beatified by Pius X, and canonized in 1920 by Benedict XV.

THE VENERABLE BEDE

Born 672, died 735. With the exceptions of occasional visits to his friends away from his own monastery at Jarrow, his life seems to have been one peaceful round of study and prayer passed in the midst of his own community. How much he was beloved by them is made manifest by the touching account of the saint's last sickness and death left by Cuthbert, one of his disciples. Studious pursuits were not given up on account of his illness and were read aloud by his bedside, but constantly the reading was interrupted by their tears. Even on the day of his death the saint was still busy dictating a translation of the Gospel of St. John. In the evening the boy who was writing it said to him, "There is still one sentence, dear master, that is not written down," and when this had been written down and the boy had told him it was finished, he said, "Thou hast spoken the truth, it is finished," and sitting on the floor of his cell, singing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," he peacefully breathed his last breath. Bede's influence both upon English and foreign scholarship was very great, and he was undoubtedly

the most learned man of his time. It is as a historian that Bede is chiefly remembered, but his exegetical writings, both in his own idea and that of his contemporaries, stood supreme amongst the most important of his works.

ST. BONIFACE, APOSTLE OF GERMANY

A native of England, though some authorities have claimed him for Ireland or Scotland. Descended from a noble family, the place and date of his birth are not known. He was martyred on June 5th, 755. From his earliest years, he showed great ability and received a religious education. His parents intended him for secular pursuits but Boniface, or Winfrid, which was his real name, felt himself called to the religious state. In 716 he set out for the mission in Friesland. From there, he went to Rome to obtain from the Pope the necessary faculties for his missionary work. The Pope gave him full authority to preach the Gospel to the Germans on the right side of the Rhine, and he then entered upon a most successful missionary career in Germany and Friesland. He visited Rome a second time on November 30th, 722, and was consecrated by the Pope as regional bishop with the name of Boniface. Then he went back to Germany where he found that Christianity had made progress but had become mixed up with heretical tenets and Pagan customs. All this caused him great anxiety, but thanks to his episcopal dignity and to his own personality, he overcame all difficulties. After establishing the Church in Germany on a firm basis, he resigned in 754 from the archdiocese of Mainz, to which he had in the meantime been appointed, and proceeded to undertake the conversion of the Frisians. He labored with success, until one day as he was proceeding to the confirmation of new converts, the heathens fell upon him and his associates, and murdered Boniface and fifty-two companions. Besides his great zeal in missionary work there is to be emphasized especially his loyalty to the Holy See.

ST. ANTONY OF PADUA

"God indeed hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly doctors."—1 Cor. xii. 28.

It is impossible to apportion exactly the praise due to each saint or to any other illustrious man; many noble actions are unknown to us, but of St. Antony we cannot say too much. As a rule *Divisiones gratiarum sunt,* but in him all are united; he was an apostle, prophet and doctor.

I. **An apostle.** Christ chose twelve apostles, and sent them forth to preach. Antony was born at Lisbon, became a canon regular of St. Augustine, but on seeing the relics of some Franciscans, who had died as martyrs in Morocco, he took ship for Italy, where the superior of the friary at Padua asked St. Francis for him. God was calling him to the Franciscan Order, of which he became a shining light. One day St. Francis ordered him to preach a sermon, and he did it so well that the title of preacher was conferred upon him. He preached all over Italy and in many parts of France; then he stayed for some time in Rome, returning from time to time to Padua, where he died. The churches were too small to contain the crowds anxious to hear him, so he used to preach in the open air, his voice being audible to ten thousand people assembled. He worked miracles; ordered the rain not to fall on his hearers, calmed tempests at sea, exorcised persons possessed by devils, and cured innumerable sick people.

II. **A prophet.** Four special prophecies are recorded.

1. One day he was preaching at the funeral of a usurer, and said that his heart was encircled with gold coins. The dead man's relatives were impelled to open the coffin, and found the heart still warm, surrounded by coins.

2. Once a sermon was interrupted by a messenger, who came up to a great lady and asked her to go home, as her son had been waylaid and killed. St. Antony cried: "It is a mistake; nothing has happened to your son, but the devil wishes to prevent you from profiting by this sermon." This was ascertained to be perfectly true.

3. At Padua he interrupted himself whilst preaching, and exclaimed: "What an insult! my relatives are accused of a murder that they have not committed." Some time afterwards a courier brought the news and asserted their innocence.

4. At Puy-en-Velay, he bowed profoundly to a notary of bad repute, and, when asked why he did so, replied that the man would die a martyr's death. The notary was in fact finally converted, accompanied a bishop to Palestine, was taken prisoner by the Saracens and put to death, because he refused to apostatize.

III. **A doctor.** St. Antony was so learned that St. Francis appointed him to instruct the novices, and thus he was the first Franciscan to be a professor. Everywhere he insisted upon the value of Holy Scripture, the teaching of faith and rules of morality. In these he found hope, comfort and salvation. He knew the Scriptures by heart. In the canonization Bull he is called *Malleus haereticorum;* heretics existed everywhere; they were few in number, but very active, and many were converted by his learning and miracles. A toad placed on his table was changed into a fowl; poison did him no harm, a mule fasted three days and knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, fishes raised their heads above water to hear him. St. Anthony himself said that he sowed the seed from the pulpit and reaped the harvest in the confessional. There has always been great devotion shown to St. Antony, but never more than at the present day. . . .

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Many shall rejoice at his nativity."—LUKE i. 14.

Who was the child of whom these words were spoken? An answer is given by prophets, angels and our Lord Himself.

In the Gospel St. John is called a man; "there was a man sent from God." The prophets called him an angel: "Behold I send my angel" (Mal. ii. 1). The people were inclined to believe that he might be the Christ (Luke iii. 15).

Three points: Though above other men, St. John was humble:

Though called an angel, he devoted himself to penance.
Though mistaken for Christ, he spoke in praise of Christ.

I. **Above other men.** "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes" (Is. v. 21). Sin makes men small and insignificant; goodness constitutes their dignity and greatness (Origen, hom. 12 in Levit.). St. John was truly great in God's sight, yet he avoided the world, lived in the wilderness, wore sackcloth. . . . But "there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. xi. 11). Our Lord alone was greater, and He was born of a pure Virgin. . . . Mary Immaculate was born of a woman, but she was greater than St. John.

St. Augustine tells us that the human race produced nothing more excellent than St. John. Theodore Studites says that the precursor was greater than the prophets, apostles or any other men. St. John Chrysostom remarks that he surpassed all the saints, and Jesus Christ alone takes precedence of him. Tertullian maintains that he was greater than all other men and inferior to God alone. Think of his humility. When questioned, he answered simply: "I am not." Nevertheless, says Tauler, there is no one who does not wish to be somebody, and desires at least to be and to appear to be something. (Sermon for 1st Sunday of Advent.) "Art thou the Christ? Art thou Elias? Art thou the prophet?" "No, I am not; I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness"—a voice, a sound that strikes the air, but is not seen.

II. **Called an Angel.** The angels stand next to God. St. Cyril remarks that John was taken for a real angel in human form (in Joan. lib. 7). He comments on the words "I send my angel," and says that he was not an angel by nature, but was so called because he came to proclaim that the way of the Lord must be prepared. Saints conspicuous for their purity and chastity are called by Tertullian, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure and St. Jerome *de familia angelica deputati.* Yet he did penance, with regard to his food, his abode, his clothing. The evangelists have recorded how he lived. Alas! we take no trouble to imitate him, although we have far more need of penance. (St. Greg. hom. 20.)

III. **Taken for Christ.** Such was the opinion current among the people, and they questioned St. John accordingly. On the banks of the Jordan God spoke to Jesus, not to John, "This is my beloved Son." St. John said that he could only baptize with water, but Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost. He called upon all to do penance and purify themselves, that they might receive God's grace and the Holy Spirit, but he added that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoes.

Would that we possessed such humility, which after all would only be the truth! Let us be humble when we are praised, and refer everything to God, who worketh in us both to desire and to do (Phil. ii. 13).

Alternative Plan

"What an one, think ye, shall this child be?"—Luke i. 66.

The angel had foretold his birth to Zachary and marvels had proved that God was with him. "Thou shalt be called the prophet of the highest." "He came, neither eating nor drinking. Christ said: *"Non inter natos mulierum major Joanne."* He was a prophet, a penitent and a great saint.

I. **A Prophet.** His praise was pronounced by our Lord: "What went you out into the desert to see?—a prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet" (Matt. xi. 9). St. Jerome says that the prophets never saw Christ, but St. John saw Him and pointed Him out to others, and for this reason he was greater than the prophets.

Before his birth St. Elizabeth said: *Exultavit infans in utero me.* An infant, *infans,* is one who cannot speak, so, as St. John Chrysostom remarks, by leaping the child prophesied, not by speech but by movement (Hom. 27). In him began the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, and he was a greater prophet than all who preceded him, for he pointed out the Lamb of God. In Padua there is a statue of Livy, with his finger on his lips; St. John the Baptist might well be represented in this attitude. Let us do him honor, not so much by words as by deeds, and let us praise God by our faith and good works.

II. **A Penitent.** Most people seek the joys of life, but St. John, though sanctified before his birth, led a life of such austerity that St. Basil describes it as one unbroken fast, and St. Jerome calls him the chief of anchorites. May his example impel us to examine our consciences, and to be brave enough to undergo the punishment required of us. Our Lord Himself repeated St. John's call: "Do penance, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17).

III. **A great Saint.** His greatness was extolled by the Fathers, the angels and Christ Himself. St. Augustine says that St. John's virtue was so great that people mistook him for the Christ (Serm. 2.—Luke iii. 15). St. Gabriel the archangel declared that he should be great; great in every sense, in his nature, person and gifts of grace . . . great in his office, merits and the practice of virtue . . . great in dignity and influence, great as a preacher, great as a martyr—great in every way. Our Lord said of him: *non surrexit major;* He knew all the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and evangelists, the hosts of martyrs, confessors and virgins, and yet He said: *non surrexit major.* This is the reason why Gerson believes that, while St. Michael is still the chief of the loyal angels, St. John the Baptist occupies the throne, left vacant by Lucifer, in the midst of the seraphim.

Although he was so great, he was the humblest of men. He did not think himself worthy to unloose the latchet of our Lord's shoe.

Peroration. Let us honor St. John practically by following his example and imitating the virtues of this humble prophet, blameless penitent, and great saint devoid of all vanity.

ST. PETER

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."—MATT. xvi. 18.

It was a great thing to be one of our Lord's disciples, still greater to be one of the chosen apostles, but to be the foremost of them. . . . Christ wanted to have a visible represen-

tative on earth. St. Peter's was a double primacy; with regard to his virtues, he is our model; with regard to his office, he is our head.

I. **His virtues.** Men judge by the outside, by talents, success, descent and achievements; but God judges by the effects of grace, taking "the weak things of the world, that He may confound the strong" (1 Cor. i. 27). A band of twelve most insignificant men accomplished a wonderful task. They had to correct most fatal errors, humble the pride of powerful persons who regarded themselves as more than human, and cause one God to be worshipped as the Ruler of all things. The apostles, with Peter at their head, effected this. He was remarkable for three characteristics.

A. *The liveliness of his faith.* He cared for no enemies, however mighty and formidable, and for Christ's sake he left everything—his family and his trade—trifles perhaps in themselves, but still all that he possessed, and he took his brother Andrew with him. He perceived his Master's true worth. Others looked for the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel, and external greatness; even the two sons of Zebedee were fired with ambition, but Peter made no mistake: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." His insight was more true, his faith more lively; as St. Jerome says, he was: *Fidei ferventioris quam ceteri.* His faith was boundless: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He proclaimed aloud his unchanging devotion: "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I." Let us not make too much of his denial. He had mingled with the crowd of Christ's enemies, after the ten other disciples had fled, and they came back later than he did. Here we have his second characteristic.

B. *The promptitude and sincerity of his repentance.* Peter was led by motives of curiosity, and in his weakness denied his Lord, but he did not run away; he remained where Christ could see him, and thus he obtained at once the help of grace; he was the first to come back, weeping bitterly. The others in their cowardly fear remained hidden and acknowledged their Master only after His resurrection. Peter acknowledged Him in the midst of His degradation, which did not blind him to our Lord's goodness.

His sincerity made him invent no excuses, for his lively faith revealed to him the Son of the living God even in humiliation. He went away to avoid any occasion of further denial. "Going forth, he wept bitterly." St. John was also present, but he did not tarry among the spectators of lower rank; he went in boldly, whereas Peter had slipped in through curiosity, and, being detected, had not enough courage to confess the truth. Years afterwards St. Peter bade his fellow-Christians resist the devil and be strong in the faith (1 Peter v. 9).

C. *The fervor of his love for Christ.* Love of God, the chief of all virtues, brings with it charity towards our neighbor. This accounts for all the various apostolic works performed from age to age. Christ asked Peter: "Lovest thou me?" "Lovest thou me more than these?" He recognized all his zeal, and rewarded it by saying: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." St. Peter, the first to acknowledge the Son of the living God, the first to defend Him on the Mount of Olives, the first to repent, was to be the first to preach. The same obligations to faith, repentance and love rest on us as on St. Peter; let us follow his example. Contemplation of him will show us how best to copy him.

II. **His Office.** To the Jews Christ was to be made known as the Messias, to the Gentiles as the true God, and on the ruins of Judaism and paganism the Church was to be established. This was the work over which St. Peter presided.

A. *To the Jews, the Messias.* The apostles were ordered to preach first at Jerusalem. The Jews had received the promises of God, and were the guardians of His Temple; so the first announcement of the new covenant was made to them. For centuries they had alternately prospered and suffered, according as God bestowed favors or punishments upon them. Their hatred of every law opposed to that of Moses caused them to put our Lord to death, but He had never spoken of an earthly kingdom, but had taught a kind of religion contrary to their prejudices; consequently He had been set aside. In spite of all these obstacles, the apostles were no longer timid; they faced the same dangers, but were transformed by the Holy Spirit, and preached Christ openly before Jews of all nations, St. Peter being at their head.

How great his courage to tell them plainly that they had put their Messias to death, and that He had risen again! Three thousand men believed in Him whom they had slain only 50 days before, and soon 5000 more converts were added to their number. Priests, scribes and Pharisees renewed their opposition; they were astounded by His miracles and arguments, and cast him into prison, stoned one of his deacons and flung one of his colleagues down from the pinnacle of the Temple, but he himself was delivered by an angel. And what has been the result? As a nation, the Jews have had to realize that our Lord's blood is upon them and their children (Matt. xxvii. 25). They no longer possess the Ark of the Covenant, they have no Temple, and it is impossible for them to observe the Mosaic Law. But others were converted, and soon the Church united all the faithful, so that they were of one heart and one mind.

B. *To the Gentiles, the true God.* Our Lord sent the apostles to teach all nations. Paganism had robbed the Gentiles of the benefits resulting from the worship of the one God; now these benefits were restored to them, and the first Gentile convert was Cornelius the centurion, who received the faith from St. Peter. Rome was the capital of the Gentile world, and thither did the apostle go, preaching to proud, powerful and voluptuous Romans, philosophers and sophists. Through him the Capitol was to pass away from the worship of Jupiter, and men's souls were to be delivered from the dominion of Satan. He attacked the old religion, and though for 250 years his followers died as martyrs, in the end Christianity triumphed, and St. Peter's Lord was recognized as the Ruler of a new Rome. Paganism disappeared before the Resurrection of Christ crucified.

Peter still lives on and his power endures. Nation after nation has attacked, burnt and sacked Rome, but it never perishes. Hatred, vengeance, ambition and barbarism all alike fail to destroy it.

C. *The Church.* In every war the enemy tries to get possession of the capital, as then the rest of the nation will submit more readily. In civil wars the streets of the capital are the first to be stained with the blood of the rebels. . . . The work of renewing the world began in its chief city. A religion that was to be

adopted by the whole world must begin by winning Rome over to the cause of Christ. Conquerors claimed the bodies and philosophers the intellect of men; paganism actually exalted human vices and passions to the dignity of dogmatic truth . . . but Peter and the apostles went further; they brought the body under the yoke of suffering and taught men to glory in death; they gave truth to the intellect, setting forth their doctrines with a unanimity of which God was the author; they led men to hate vice as a degradation, and insisted upon penance, which purifies and virtue which exalts mankind; and they pointed out to every Christian the glory awaiting him in heaven. So their followers suffered and died; rulers and executioners heard with amazement the songs of triumph raised by Christians on their way to death. . . . Later on the vicar of Christ welcomed the envoys sent from flourishing communities of Christians in every part of the world . . . and at length all who held the faith of Peter repeated with enthusiasm: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church." There is nothing problematical about St. Peter's primacy. Whoever denies it is a heretic. Consider the history of St. Peter. When a twelfth apostle had to be elected to replace Judas, Peter spoke and presided at the election; he was the first to announce the Resurrection; he was spokesman for all the apostles before the Sanhedrin; he was the first to turn to the Gentiles; whenever difficulties arose, application was made to Peter; Paul went to Jerusalem to see him; and, as Bossuet remarks, St. Peter's ministry did not cease at his death, since what was destined to be the foundation of an everlasting Church could never end. Similar expressions occur in the works of St. Irenaeus, St. Cyprian, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine and St. Jerome.

St. Peter is the Vicar of Christ, the visible head of the Church, the teacher and light of each successive age. He lives and speaks in his successors. O chief of shepherds, father of the faithful, ever-living Peter; through thee we pass to Jesus, who hath the words of life, and through Him to eternal glory in heaven.

St. Peter and the Church

Our Saviour chose Peter to be the head of His Church, and made him the firm rock upon which she is built.

St. Peter's faith is the foundation of the Church, his life is her example, his see is her center.

I. **St. Peter's faith.** When Christ questioned the apostles, Peter replied: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," and our Lord answered: "And I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will built my Church." He was therefore chosen and prepared to be the foundation of the Church. Faith is indispensable to religion, and faith in Christ must above all things be firm. If there had been no Incarnation, what would have become of our Master's work? St. Peter did not hesitate; of all the apostles he possessed the firmest faith and proclaimed it most emphatically: "Thou art Christ."

The Church is undoubtedly built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephes. ii. 20), but St. Peter was the first to confess his faith, the first to teach it to others, the first to convert the Jews, the first to receive the Gentiles. He was to be the chief shepherd. "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

Error, wickedness and cruelty have struggled against him in every age, but "the gates of hell shall not prevail." Christ's words will never pass away, and the faith of the Roman Church, based on Peter, never wavers. He lives on in his authority, he casts his nets and utters his decrees. The body occupying the pontifical throne may bear various names, but the body is mortal, the soul continues, and it is unchanging.

II. **St. Peter's life.** He himself laid down the rule that a pastor should be a pattern of the flock from the heart (1 Peter v. 3). He is to us all a pattern of repentance. If he had not sinned, or if he had not fully atoned for his sin, he, the man set at the head of so many others, might have failed to understand the needs of a Church that includes so vast a number of sinners. He was a frail mortal, who fell, but rose again immediately; a timid disciple, who denied his persecuted Master, but afterwards braved death for His sake. He is a pattern

of humility under all circumstances. Throughout his life he wept, and his tears wore two furrows in his cheeks. When we remember this, let us humble ourselves, and not despair. We possess neither his spirit nor his talents, but we can follow his example, instead of forgetting our sins and giving way to pride.

He is a pattern of fidelity and courage. The apostles divided the world between them, and the head of the Church went to the greatest capitals. At first he remained in Jerusalem, facing the Jews and reproaching them with having slain their Messias. He converted many thousands there, and afterwards was called to Antioch, a very important city in the East, where our Lord's disciples were for the first time termed Christians. Finally he went to Rome, the chief city of the West, and the headquarters of paganism.

III. **The See of Peter.** "Go and teach all nations." "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." "Confirm thy brethren." Rome was the see of Peter. (a) There is no danger, as long as men remain in union with Rome, but in every age heresy and wickedness conspire for the ruin of souls, and untold misery is caused by their agents. The faithful adherents of the faith of Peter alone are the true worshippers of Christ; they practice the same virtues, share the same submission to the Church, possess the same sacraments, and all participate in the salvation that is to be found in the bark of Peter, which no storm is able to submerge. (b) There is no reason why men should not remain in union with Rome. Can a child by rebelling against his mother's authority break the bonds that unite mother and son? If you study the commandments of the Church, the mother of all Christians, you will find them applicable to all men. By obeying them many have sanctified their souls and become saints. Let us therefore shun intercourse with unbelievers. "He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke x. 16) (c) Consider the Israelites in Egypt; to eat the lamb elsewhere than at home, and not to have the blood on the doorpost meant death. I do not judge those who belong to the soul of the Church and are in good faith, but the Church is a Christian

society, a visible society, and must have visible members. You possess baptism and the other sacraments, prayer, public worship. See that you add to these advantages the state of grace. Let us then have faith and hope in holy Church, let us love her, and we shall find in her courage to persevere in virtue and good examples for us to follow. Let us take St. Peter as a model, and resolve always to be loyal to him and his successors, that one day we may be admitted to the Church triumphant in heaven.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

"I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart."—1 KINGS ii. 35.

Every day God crowns saints unknown to the world, but from time to time He raises up some, who by their life and good works are so conspicuous that they can never be forgotten. One of these latter is St. Vincent de Paul, who as a child lived in a lonely cottage, as a priest reformed many communities, rescued the miserable, built hospitals. . . .

Two points: The modesty of his private life; his great works of charity.

I. **His private life.** He was born on April 24th, 1576, at Poüy (Landes), of poor, but not destitute parents, who were good Catholics. God had implanted in his heart the spirit of charity; when he went out to keep the sheep, he used to share with others the food that his mother had put into his bag. Once, being forced to save money, he accumulated fifteen pence, and then gave it all to the poor. At the age of twelve he was sent to school at Dax; at sixteen he became tutor to a lawyer's son in the town, that his parents might be put to less expense on his account. At twenty he received minor Orders, and went to study theology, first at Saratoga and afterwards at Toulouse. On Sept. 27th, 1600, when he was twenty-four, he was ordained priest by the Bishop of Périgueux. Five years later, whilst going by sea from Marseille to Toulon, he was seized by pirates, taken to Tunis and sold as a slave. He

passed from one master to another, and at last fell into the hands of a renegade, whom he converted, and then they went together to Rome. The Pope sent him with a message to the king of France, and on his arrival in Paris he was made parish priest of Clichy and later of Châtillon, then tutor to the children of Emmanuel de Gondi, and finally chaplain to the galleys, and in that capacity he once set a galley slave at liberty and himself took his place.

II. **His public life of charity.** Being on one occasion in Picardy, with a dying man, St. Vincent noticed that the people there were very ignorant of their religion, and so he held a mission in the parish. His success suggested to him the idea of associating others with himself, and this was the origin of the Congregation of the Mission. The canons of St. Victor gave him their priory of St. Lazare to be its headquarters. The work of missions soon showed him that many priests were insufficiently instructed. Parish priests used to present to the bishop, as candidates for ordination, men who had sometimes received no training at all. The Council of Trent had ordered seminaries to be established, and Vincent set about the task of bringing them into existence. At St. Lazare he founded retreats and conferences, which were well attended by the clergy, who thus became more capable of discharging their priestly duties. St. Vincent's work was destined to increase. The provinces of France were devastated by war and pestilence, and he exerted himself to collect food, clothes and tools for the sufferers. He supplied more than 25 towns and hundreds of villages with the necessaries of life, and in Paris alone he supported 15,000 poor. He opened refuges and asylums, and hospitals were built for the sick and for foundlings. Besides the Congregation of the Mission at St. Lazare, he founded the Sisters of Charity, who are known all over the world. It would take far too long to dwell upon the many virtues, the true humility, and the spirit of mortification displayed by this holy priest, who was noted for his wisdom as a director of souls and for his powerful preaching.

He died on Sept. 27th, 1660, was beatified by Benedict XIII in 1729, and canonized by Clement XII in 1737.

O blessed founder of two great congregations and of so many charitable works, hear our prayer, and help us by thy powerful intercession.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE

"There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance."—LUKE xv. 7.

These words are peculiarly applicable to our saint, although there is not a single Christian who might not also cause joy in heaven by repentance. Of St. Mary Magdalene our Lord said: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). Her love of Christ was strong, intense and boundless.

I. **Her love was strong,** for it triumphed over the attractions of the world. Joy due to goodness is blessed by God, but pleasure derived from sin is harmful and degrading, and yet some people always long for it. The chains forged by our passions are as strong as iron, but Mary Magdalene broke them, and the tears of repentance, that she shed now form her chief delight. She triumphed over her own life of shame. She blushed for her evil life and came to Jesus. "There can be no more human respect, where there is a spark of true love of God" (St. Bernardine). Satan and sin were ruining her, but she was eager to seek salvation. She triumphed over the fear that might have held her back. She knew that she must change completely, repent and weep, but nothing mattered to her; the most painful duty became a delight.

II. **Her love was intense.** She gave God 1. all her mind. We are commanded to love God with all our mind, which means, according to St. Bernard, *Tota memoria, sine oblivione.* Mary Magdalene bore Christ always in mind, and thought of nothing else. 2. All her heart. We ought to love God with our whole heart, and therefore we love Him too little, if we love anything else just as much. The prodigal son thought only of his father, and asked to be one of his servants, and Mary Magdelene loved Christ alone, and He alone satis-

fied her. So she knelt at His feet in Simon's house, and was with Him at Bethany and on Calvary. 3. All her devotion. She had served the world and knew that all its pleasures and riches tended to vanity, self-indulgence and sin. Now she shed tears of love and repentance, devoting herself wholly to Christ. Thus her intense love caused her to give Him all her mind, all her heart and all her devotion.

III. **Her love was boundless.** She continually thought of Christ. 1. hanging on the cross, 2. lying in the sepulchre, 3. reigning in heaven. 1. The Cross. St. Peter denied his Master thrice, and thrice had to repeat the assurance of his love. He had been with our Lord on Thabor and had witnessed His miracles, but he forsook Him on the cross; Mary Magdalene, however, was there; her sins had brought her low, but the blood of Christ had purified her. 2. The Sepulchre: She went thither early in the morning, impatient of delay. She hastened to Peter and John, asking eager questions; then she remained weeping by the empty tomb, and there at last she saw her Lord, and went to proclaim His resurrection. 3. Heaven. After the Ascension, in Judea and in Provence, her love was changeless, insatiable, supreme. Thanks to the light bestowed by God it never diminished. It never grew weary; the more one loves, the more one wishes to love. It never ceased to increase, but carried her away into wonderful ecstasies.

Peroration. St. Mary Magdalene sets us an example of true conversion, love of God, and goodness of life. God loves us all so much! We all have sinned; let us repent, and do good works that will win us a place in heaven.

ST. JAMES

"Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom."—MATT. XX. 21.

These words were spoken by Mary Salome, mother of the two apostles, James and John. They express her ambition, and our Lord replied by reminding them of the law of sacrifice: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?"

God's kingdom is one of justice, glory and grace, and in it St. James has a throne.

I. **A throne of justice.** He earned it by his obedience to God, as did St. Michael and the angels with him. Christ was obedient even to the death of the cross; so were the apostles, when they obeyed the order to go and teach all nations; so were the martyrs when they suffered and died; and so were all the saints, when they sacrificed everything for Christ's sake. St. James purchased this throne by voluntary poverty. In the first of the beatitudes our Lord said: "Blessed are the poor." The apostles left everything to follow Him. St. James won his throne by his labors. Our Lord promised that the apostles should sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. St. Paul bade Timothy "labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 3). (Discuss St. James's apostolic labors.)

II. **A throne of glory.** St. James was related to our Lord; he was one of the chosen three on Thabor, at the miraculous draught of fishes and on the Mount of Olives. He was a willing martyr; the first of the apostles to lay down his life for Christ, thus drinking of His chalice, and, as St. Bonaventure remarks, rendering to Him the love that he had received from Him.

III. **A throne of grace.** How many miracles have been worked at his intercession! He obtained the faith for unbelievers. In Spain he converted only nine pagans, but they became apostles and bishops to their own countrymen. When the king of Castile was called upon to give over a hundred maidens yearly to the Moors, St. James appeared to him, ordered him to fight, and gave him the victory. (This led to the foundation of the military Order of St. James.) His disciples in Jerusalem carried his remains to Galicia, and a rock opened to received them, and then closed again. Subsequently the cathedral of Compostello (*Jacobo apostolo*) was built on the spot, and became one of the chief places of pilgrimage in Western Europe. Many miracles were worked there, and in the 12th Century Pope Calixtus II used to say that anyone who wished to enumerate them all would need a thousand

tongues and unlimited time. The remains were re-discovered in 1885 (Encyclical of Leo XIII).

ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

"This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."—Acts ix. 15.

We may apply to St. Ignatius these words addressed by our Lord to Ananias regarding St. Paul. St. Ignatius belonged to a noble Spanish family, and was brought up at the court of king Ferdinand. He was an officer in the army, and, having been wounded, he employed his enforced leisure in meditating upon the things of God, and this led to his conversion. Think of St. Paul on the way to Damascus, and afterwards with Ananias, and of St. Ignatius, first at Pampeluna and then at Manresa. Each was a "vessel of election" abounding in the grace of God, the love of God and zeal for God's glory.

I. **The grace of God.** Three points in the conversion of St. Ignatius.

1. Triumph of Grace. Our free will enables us to resist grace, but there is an efficacious grace of which St. Augustine says: *Haec gratia, quae occulte humanis cordibus divina largitate tribuitur, a nullo duro corde respuitur* (de praedest. c. 8). Before his conversion Ignatius busied himself with worldly affairs and the army, but after being seriously wounded at the siege of Pampeluna, he had to remain motionless in bed, and asked for books to read. Thus grace came to him, and from the service of the king he passed to that of God.

2. Work of grace. St. Bernard says that grace makes a sluggish will run quickly. In spite of his wounded leg, Ignatius went on foot to Montserrat, gave his rich clothing to a poor man, and for a year worked as infirmarian in the hospice at Manresa; then he visited Barcelona, Rome, Padua, Venice and Jerusalem, where he wished to stay permanently, but God brought him back to Barcelona, where he gave edification to all, spending his time in prayer, and instructing the children in their catechism.

3. Humility. Certain conspicuous graces dispose men to humble themselves. From the Court St. Ignatius went to the poor, to the hospitals, and finally to school to study grammar.

II. **Love of God.** It is impossible to describe the love that filled the heart of St. Ignatius. He thought of nothing but God. Of St. Mary Magdalene Origen remarks that she forgot to be afraid, forgot to be glad, forgot, in short, everything except Him whom she loved more than all. He spoke of nothing but God. Among men "he that is of the earth . . . of the earth he speaketh" (John iii. 31). St. Ignatius never said a useless, angry or wounding word. He desired to please God alone. St. Paul says: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i. 10), and our Lord said: "I do always the things that please Him (John viii. 29). St. Ignatius chose as his motto *Ad majorem Dei gloriam.*

III. **Zeal for the glory of God.** St. Ignatius sought an outlet for his zeal. He remembered the motto of Cardinal Alexander Farnese, afterwards Pope Paul III, *Sic mitte sagittam,* and he turned to the ignorant and sinful. In order to be better qualified to teach, he began to study at the age of 33, and followed the course at the Sorbonne in Paris; took his degree, and then with nine other graduates founded his Society. A year later his followers were to be found in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and even in India, and no one can number the sinners whom they converted. St. Paul told the Philippians that he longed after them all in Christ (Phil. i. 8). St. Ignatius longed to bring the whole world to God, and men of every rank and nation still benefit by his zeal. *Sic mitte sagittam.*

Peroration. We all ought to possess grace, love and zeal, and to derive benefits from them.

ST. DOMINIC

"I am appointed a preacher."—1 Tim. ii. 7.

Three points: St. Dominic's learning, zeal and life.

I. **His learning.** "The wise man will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be occupied in the prophets"

(Ecclus. xxxix. 1). He possessed three kinds of knowledge; he knew himself, the hearts of men, and the lessons taught by the cross. His was a fruitful knowledge; St. Paul told the pagan converts that he had begotten them by the Gospel (1 Cor. iv. 15). St. Dominic converted the heretics in Languedoc, Navarre, etc. St. Augustine remarks that a preacher ought to be a man of prayer, before becoming a man of words. St. Dominic used to pray night and day. At the foot of our Lady's statue, he received the revelation of the Rosary.

II. **His zeal was ardent.** Zeal had been defined as *amatorius quidam impetus.* It never flagged and was unbounded. His mother, in a dream, had seen him with a burning torch. He never hesitated when he could go in quest of heretics and sinners; he preached continually and gave missions.

II. **His life.** St. Paul bids Timothy be an example "in word, in conversation, in charity" (1 Tim. iv. 12). Our words, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, should be circumspect, weighty and well ordered. The Angelic Doctor had no doubt the Founder of his Order in mind. (Apply these three requirements to St. Dominic's public and private utterances.) His conversation after his sermons edified all around him, and his charity was the motive underlying all his works.

(The details of his life may be found in the Breviary.)

ST. BERNARD

"Great is our Lord, and great is His power, and of His wisdom there is no number."—Ps. 146, 5.

His virtues in the world, in religious life, in the Church.

I. **In the world.** Absolute purity; prompt response to his vocation, ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

II. **In religious life.** Profound humility; perpetual penances; continual raising of his soul towards God.

III. **In the Church.** Wisdom and prudence in dealing with difficulties; generosity in repressing vice; wonderful charity.

Alternative Plan

Another outline. A scholar and a man of action.

I. **A scholar.** Philosopher, theologian, director of souls, doctor and Father of the Church. His writings have given praise to God, have led men to love our Lady, and have converted many souls.

II. **A man of action.** His activity was based on the spirit and help of God. He founded an Order, noted for its sanctity and permanence. He preached a Crusade, put down a schism, converted many heretics, and was the enlightened counsellor of Pope Eugenius III.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW

"He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit."—1 Cor. vi. 17.

St. Bartholomew was joined to God in heart, with which he gave himself completely to Christ; in faith, with which he preached the Gospel; through the cross, which ended his martyrdom.

I. **In heart.** St. Bernard says that the fuller our hearts are of charity, the more closely are we united with God. Now St. Bartholomew renounced everything for God, prayed without ceasing, and stripped himself of all that he possessed.

II. **In faith.** As a disciple and an apostle he listened to Christ, and received the faith, and went to make it known in India, where it was welcomed by princes and peoples.

III. **His martyrdom** was exceptionally prolonged, he was scourged, flayed alive and crucified, an interval of several days being allowed between each infliction of torture. His agony was excessive and of long duration. Our trifling sufferings, if continuous, become unbearable; what must his have been?

BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

"John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."—MARK vi. 18.

Three points: St. John's zeal; Herodias' wickedness; Herod's injustice. Three people differing greatly in God's sight.

I. **St. John's zeal.** Seldom does a courtier speak the truth to a sinful master, but St. John was God's messenger. His zeal was ardent, prudent, generous. Andrea of Crete asks: "Do you not think that John was consumed with zeal, and the most ardent of all those who are moved by zeal?" The angel Gabriel foretold that he should go "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke i. 17). Abbott Ruppert compares the preaching of truth with music that touches the heart, and calls St. John *Praecentor veritatis.* John had tried to admonish Herod, and desired him to amend his ways rather than perish. He had called the crowd collectively "offspring of vipers"; but then every man was free not to apply the words to himself. To Herod he gave no order, but simply said: "It is not lawful"; the expression suggested that he was giving information rather than administering a rebuke. Herod had been guilty of great crimes, he was a murderer and parricide, eager to shed blood, but nevertheless St. John preferred to face danger in his presence, rather than be forgetful of God's command. "With full and perfect liberty he chose to bear injustice, rather than not say what was right" (St. Augustine).

II. **Wickedness of Herodias.** There have been many holy women, but also many wicked. Herodias did not like St. John's rebuke, and desired to have him put to death. She "laid snares for him, and was desirous to put him to death, and could not." There are women who would gladly kill certain people, and, as they cannot, try to compromise them and destroy their good reputation. Herod knew John to be a just and holy man, and used to listen to him; consequently Herodias feared that the king would send her away, and continually besought him to put John to death; for a long time

Herod refused, but at last "a convenient day was come" (Mark vi. 21). Of a wicked woman St. Jerome says that she possesses a thousand means of doing harm, and St. Peter Chrysologus says that the serpent was then lurking in Herodias, and he calls her daughter "the serpent's offspring."

III. **Herod's injustice.** "Sending an executioner, he commanded that John's head should be brought on a dish." Why? Because after seeing the young girl dance, he had sworn a rash oath, and persevered in sin. There was no harm in a birthday supper, but its consequences were disastrous. The young girl danced admirably, and Herod swore: "Whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give it thee, though it be the half of my kingdom." After consulting her mother, she said: "I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist." John was widely known as a prophet, but his death was a dancer's reward (St. Ambrose). Herod was sorry for his oath. St. Augustine says that it was a rash oath, and wickedly carried out. "You ought to fight against your evil habit; I assert that it is evil, and you ought to set aside all swearing." What should Herod have done? He should have broken his sinful word, and not have committed so foul a crime (Theophylact). Although Herod had listened gladly to St. John, he did not overcome himself. Herodias gratified her craving for revenge by piercing with a needle the tongue of the *Praecentor veritatis*. Such is the story of the tragedy; who would not choose the part of St. John rather than that of Herod or Herodias? After nineteen hundred years the crime still remains horrible; those who committed it are still being punished, whilst the saint of God still reigns with Him in heaven.

ST. ROSE OF LIMA

Born at Lima, Peru, 1586; died there 30th August, 1617. As a child she was remarkable for great reverence and pronounced love for all things relating to God. This so took possession of her that her entire life was given to prayer and mortification. She was scrupulously obedient and gave earnest

attention to her parents' instructions, to her studies and to her domestic work, especially with her needle. After reading of St. Catherine, she determined to take that saint as her model. Finally she determined to take a vow of virginity, much against the wish of her parents, who desired her to marry. Overcoming the opposition of her parents, and with the consent of her confessor, she was allowed to retire to a little grotto which she had built with her brother's aid in a small garden, where she became practically a recluse save for her visits to the Blessed Sacrament. In her twentieth year, she received the habit of St. Dominic. She led a life of great severity and variety of penance to heroic degree. She was beatified by Clement IX in 1667, and canonized in 1671 by Clement X, the first American to be so honored.

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

"At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince."—DAN. xii. 1.

At a king's court on earth are princes and nobles; at the court of the heavenly King are angels and saints. Ambition prompts men always to raise themselves to a higher position, and long ago Lucifer desired to become equal to God. But a prince of the angels put himself at the head of the loyal host, and throughout the universe re-echoed the cry: *Quis ut Deus?* This leader was Michael, exalted by God above the other angels, over whom he presides, and above men, whom he protects.

I. **God exalted St. Michael.** St. Thomas thinks that each angel differs from all the rest in his essence and species. Every numerical distinction is based on matter, but the angels are pure spirits, without bodies, hence they must either be indistinguishable, or else differ only in essence and species. The perfection of St. Michael in his nature is unquestioned. How vast is the multitude of angels! and St. Michael is their prince.

He stands supreme in virtue of the grace with which God adorned him. From the time of their creation the angels were endowed with grace, both sanctifying and actual, so that they

might merit their bliss in heaven. After their triumph over Lucifer, they were confirmed in grace, and St. Michael more than all the rest, because he was their leader. "In dignity and honors he was preferred to all the other heavenly spirits" (St. Basil). He stands supreme in virtue of the glory bestowed upon him as victor in the warfare against Satan. St. Paul tells us that in the sky "one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars" (1 Cor. xv. 41). Christ is the sun, our Lady is the moon, and the angels and saints are the stars; but "star differeth from star in glory," and of all the angels St. Michael possesses peculiar brilliancy.

II. **St. Michael was the chief of the angels.** (1) In the army raised against Lucifer. Originally the angels could sin, for they had to merit the bliss that they enjoy. God revealed to them the future Incarnation of the Word, and called upon them to worship the God-man (Hebr. i). Lucifer refused to do so, because human nature was united to God's divinity, but the loyal angels, with Michael at their head, submitted. (2) In the battle against Lucifer and his angels. The battle was great because it was fought in heaven, between troops, not of weak men, but of mighty angels; it was great, too, in its cause, since it concerned the worship of the Incarnate Word, and in the manner in which it was fought, viz., by means of acts of the will and the intellect, of obedience and disobedience. It would seem that a third of the angels fell. "And the dragon's tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven" (Apoc. xii. 4). The war-cry: *Quis ut Deus.* (3) In the victory won. Painters represent him with a sword or lance in his hand, and the dragon at his feet. When the Machabees fought, their standard bore the inscription: "Who is like unto Thee among the Gods, O Lord?" but St. Michael's is: "Who is like unto God?" When you are tempted and assailed by Satan, retort: "Who is like unto God?" and ask St. Michael's help.

III. **St. Michael protects mankind.** The Israelites guarded the tradition of God's promises, and knew that the human race needed a Redeemer. Daniel says of St. Michael that he is "the

great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people." When the Hebrews were ill-treated in Egypt, St. Michael fought for them during the ten plagues; he led them across the Red Sea, and caused the Egyptians to be drowned; he spoke to Moses on Sinai, and directed the cloud of fire; he slew 85,000 soldiers fighting for Sennacherib, an enemy of Israel, and he transported the prophet Habacuc from Judea to Babylon. Christianity, the religion of God's elect, took the place of Judaism, persecutions arose, martyrs died, and heretics attacked the faith. But St. Michael's unseen hand has ever protected the Church against the powers of hell. She has of course, the Holy Spirit, the words of Christ, the holy Sacraments, but there is no reason why a special guardian angel should not watch over her. Baronius says that the Catholic Church recognizes St. Michael as her patron and protector, because of the remarkable favors that she has received from him. St. Lawrence Justinian makes a similar statement. When St. Joan of Arc was about to effect the deliverance of Orleans, she saw the archangel in visible form on the bridge.

Peroration. O holy Michael, thou art more busily concerned than all other angels with the human race; thou art a great leader, a powerful protector, intercede for us. Rescue us from Satan and bring us to God. He hath highly exalted thee, and great was the victory that thou didst win. If thou fight for us, we fear nothing; thy war cry, "Who is like unto God?" shows us that the issue of the conflict is certain. May we praise thee here below, and with thee adore God for ever in heaven. Amen.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him."—Is. xi. 2.

There are in life two great sources of activity, the mind or spirit and the heart. Some persons are guided and influenced more by one, others by the other. Let us study these two points in St. Francis.

I. The spirit of St. Francis. He was full of (1) *scorn* for

the world and its allurements, (2) *love* for men and desire for their salvation; (3) *hatred* of bodily comfort, which he resisted and mortified.

1. Scorn of the world. "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 33). Like St. Peter, St. Francis could say: "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee" (Matt. xix. 27). St. Gregory says of St. Peter that he abandoned even the desire of possessing anything (Hom. 5 in ev.). St. Bernard remarks that it is better to forsake the world than to be forsaken by it. In another place St. Gregory exclaims: "Earthly things are a sort of shackles for the body; let us discard them."

2. Love of mankind. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John xiii. 35). "God is charity" (1 John iv. 8). St. Francis used to exclaim: *Amor non amatur;* he could truly say: "I was the father of the poor." "To the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, I am a debtor" (Rom. i. 14). St. Bonaventure says that St. Francis had a burning zeal for the salvation of all who were to be saved. St. Gregory remarks that where love exists, it accomplishes great things; if it refuse to act, it is unworthy of the name (Hom. 50 in ev.). "Our heart is enlarged" says St. Paul (2 Cor. vi. 11).

3. Hatred of self-indulgence. The world cannot hate itself, but a true disciple of Christ hates himself in this world, in order to gain heaven. "He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). St. Bernard explains that a man hates self when he loses everything, like the martyrs, and when he afflicts and mortifies himself like a penitent. St. Francis longed for martyrdom. He resembled our Lord.

II. **The heart of St. Francis,** was that of a son towards God, that of a mother towards mankind, that of a judge towards himself. He submitted without reserve to God's will. "Go, Francis, repair and support my house that is tottering." In a vision the Pope saw St. Francis and St. Dominic holding up the church of St. John Lateran. Their Orders have always co-operated with one another. St. Francis sought God's glory in all things. "I seek not my own glory" (John viii. 50). "I am the herald of the

great King." Think how he taught and toiled for God's sake. He was on fire with love of God. He had a right to complain to others *Amor non amatur,* whilst he received the stigmata. His heart was that of a mother towards mankind, revealing its love in conferring benefits, in tender anxiety and in generous devotion. He followed Christ's example, wept, prayed, labored, suffered and denied himself. Often he gave away his garments, tended the sick, deprived himself of necessaries . . . He was anxious for the salvation of all men, and sent his brethren to every part of the world. He founded the Order of Poor Clares for women, and the Third Order for men and women living in the world. His heart was full of devotion. In the defence of her children a mother often forgets her weakness, and shows true heroism. . . . St. Francis was inspired with irresistible zeal; he overcame the devil, the passions of men, heresy and mahometanism. In I Kings xiv. we read how Jonathan sent his armor-bearer to the camp of the Philistines; St. Francis was God's armor-bearer.

His heart was that of a judge towards himself. He judged and condemned himself to shame, suffering and death. St. Augustine calls humility the climax of virtue (Serm. 2 in ps. 58). St. Bernard asks: "What is this sublime humility, that cannot be overcome by honors, nor accustom itself to glory?" (Hom. 4 sup. missus est). St. Francis humbled himself so as to become a laughing-stock to children; he was treated as a madman, and went about in public with a rope round his neck. Christians are the heirs of the cross (St. Cyprian). Our saint practiced this divine doctrine; he scourged himself, rolled on brambles . . . and might have said to himself: *mutatus es mihi in crudelem* (Job xxx). Of sinners it is said: *Viscera impiorum crudelia,* for they destroy themselves, but the saints, in order to save their souls, hate themselves. "He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). Incessant penance is a martyrdom. St. Francis used to accuse himself that he was a friend of the devil, an enemy of Christ, and worthy of death.

Three times he set out for heathen lands, hoping to die a martyr's death, but the Sultan of Babylon, far from putting him to death, admired him, and gave him presents. St. Francis

would have preferred to die at the stake or on the cross or by the sword!

Peroration. The world is full of dangers, and all fervor has died out. Let us ask St. Francis, whose intercession is so powerful, to obtain for us. . . .

ST. BRIGID

Born in 451 of princely ancestors at Faughert, near Dundalk, County Louth; died February 1st, 525, at Kildare. St. Brigid founded two monastic institutions, one for men and one for women. She was a patroness of students, and founded a school of art. She ranks as one of the most remarkable Irish women of the fifth century and as the Patroness of Ireland. Her friendship with St. Patrick is attested by a paragraph from the "Book of Armagh" which says "Between St. Patrick and St. Brigid, the columns of the Irish, there was so great a friendship of charity that they had but one heart and one mind. Through him and through her Christ performed many miracles." In Ireland of to-day, after 1500 years, the memory of the "Mary of the Gael," as St. Brigid was lovingly called, is as dear as ever to the Irish heart, and Brigid predominates there as a Christian name.

ST. TERESA

"She hath loved much."—LUKE vii. 47.

These words were spoken by our divine Lord of Mary Magdalene, who thenceforth never desisted from penance, prayer and good works. It is not, however, only to penitent souls that God promises heaven; no less happy are those who from childhood onwards have been true to the practice of their religion and to virtue.

In the sixteenth century St. Teresa was thinking and working for God. She loved Him ardently, undertook many tasks, founded religious houses, and gave a great impetus towards

perfecting the life of Carmel; in fact the words: "She hath loved much" sum up her activities and explain their results. She was characterized by patience, activity and zeal for sacrifice.

I. **Her patience.** When quite young, St. Teresa read the Acts of the Martyrs, and desired to go and suffer for the faith at the hands of the Moors. Later on she made some concessions to the world, but her father warned her of her danger, and she resolved to suffer everything for God's sake. She readily accepted all the sufferings of the religious life, and during forty years had to contend with continual ill-health, besides much opposition to her foundations, her works of reform, etc. She was even treated to though she were possessed: she had to appear before the king, the Papal Nunzio, the Inquisition; one confessor deprived her of Holy Communion for two years, and for eighteen years our Lord allowed her to be without any interior consolation. As a virgin spouse of the Lamb of God she prayed to suffer much for love of Him. She longed for tribulation, delighted in insults, chastised her body, devoted herself to works of penance, returned good for evil.

II. **Her activity.** St. Teresa's love was real, not feigned; she never ceased to practice interior virtues; her heart, tongue and works tended to God's glory. Virginity is opposed to everything carnal, and aims at great perfection in spiritual good works. St. Ambrose says that one who is a virgin by reason of her chastity, is a mother by reason of all her good works (lib. de Virg.). The truth of these statements is proved by what St. Teresa accomplished. It was no easy task to establish a reformed Order, but her love of God enabled her to carry out her work, in spite of much opposition, and her reform still flourishes.

III. **Her spirit of sacrifice.** In a vision St. Teresa saw an angel with a golden lance tipped with fire; and writes (Chap. 29 of her Life): *Quod mihi tantam languoris violentiam inferebat, ut anima mea a corpore divelli videretur.* Our Lord was dead when the soldier's lance pierced His heart, but our Lady felt the pain of the blow. "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce," had

been Simeon's words to her. St. Teresa, too, shared in the suffering, she felt pain, for she was wounded, but also joy, for the wound was due to love. She could say, like Job; *Mirabiliter me crucias.*

Truly pious souls know what it is to languish with a desire for God. "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love" (Cant. v. 8). Abbott Ruppert, commenting on these words, says: "How great must be the pain and suffering involved in not seeing Him; what sighs and groans are uttered by one who still remains in exile here below!" St. Teresa almost died of her longing to see God. She loved Him intensely amidst all her trials, sufferings and labors. Let us follow her example, and also love Him. The little love that we can offer Him will bring us fresh grace, enabling us to love Him more and more.

ALL SAINTS

"We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him."—Job ii. 18.

The very thought of heaven is rapture to a Christian, it suggests the satisfaction of all his desires, the fulfilment of all his hopes. If at this moment the angels and saints were to appear before us in all their glory, what should we feel? There awaits us in heaven a twofold happiness, corresponding to that of the body and soul respectively.

I. **Bodily happiness.** Is. lxiv. 4 and St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 9, tell us that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."

A. What has the eye of man not seen? Adam beheld with delight the marvels of the earthly Paradise . . . the world as we know it, deformed by sin, is only the wreckage of what once existed, and yet it still contains wonderful beauties that inspire a painter to depict them . . . Think of sculpture, music, optics and the treasures hidden underground . . . Imagine a heaven containing all that is fairest in this world; read in the Apocalypse the description of the city built of precious stones

(Apoc. xxi)—all this still falls far short of heaven. The beauties of earth belong to death; in heaven all is divine. Here all was created by a mere word spoken by God: *Dixit et facta sunt,* but in heaven He has made preparations from all eternity. Human greatness is insignificant in comparison with that of God's elect. The created light of the sun is nothing in comparison with the unchanging light of God that illumines the heavens and penetrates all the saints. "In Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10). The bodies of martyrs and anchorites will shine resplendent with this light.

B. What has the ear of man not heard? Chateaubriand says that man sang the glory of God before he spoke. Man always uses music, vocal or instrumental, where great things are concerned. Our eyes see various colors and our ears hear various sounds and harmonies. Music makes a warrior face death, and softens hard hearts and soothes the passions of men. Poets have sung of the music of the spheres: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei . . . dies diei eructat verbum* (Ps. xviii). In heaven the azure vaults reëcho with the songs of the saints and the praises of the Most High. There is heard the song of the elect, of which David spoke. "Let us sing unto the Lord a new song." "Thou art the God of my heart and my portion for ever" (Ps. 72, 26).

II. **Spiritual happiness.** "Neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared."

A. Intellectual pleasures, which far surpass those of sense. Different branches of science. Newton, Archimedes. In heaven human knowledge is a little thing, and the saints cannot be devoid of it. They possess also theological knowledge, as faith gives place to sight. They behold also the merciful goodness of God, that effected their salvation . . . the prayers of parents and friends, the intercession of their guardian angels, who have kept them in the right way.

B. Joys of the heart. Our heart may be a heaven on earth, it may cause us untold suffering; it can produce the most exalted feelings or delirium, madness and folly. It suggests great crimes, but it is also capable of great devotion. In heaven, however, the heart is, as it were, steeped in the divine essence, which it desires to receive in ever greater abundance.

In order to contain it, the heart must be enlarged: "Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged" (Is. lx. 5). Do not fear satiety or disgust. Here everything has limitations, and nothing completely satisfies our hearts, which are created for what is infinite. Think of the diversity in nature; no two leaves are exactly alike. In heaven God is infinite, His perfections are infinite in number, and each in itself is infinite. Hence there will always be something fresh for us to contemplate. God appears to His elect; the eternal gates open (Ps. 23), heaven awaits you, your earthly course is ended, the bliss of eternity dawns. "Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting" (Dan. xii. 2).

Peroration. We are the children of the saints, destined to share their glory. They are awaiting us, and we must follow the path that they have trod. O God, the hardships scarcely alarm me, since the reward urges me forward (St. Aug). "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15).

ST. ANDREW

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—MATT. xvi. 24.

St. Andrew was the first apostle called by our Lord; he brought with him his brother Peter, and both died on the cross. It was the reward of their long-continued sufferings, and it is the symbol of self-denial and self-sacrifice.

I. **Life of St. Andrew.** He was a disciple of St. John the Baptist, and after hearing his testimony to Christ, began to follow Him. After Pentecost St. Andrew went to preach the gospel in European Scythia, Chalcis, Greece, Epirus and Thrace. Finally he reached Achaia where the pro-consul Aegeas forbade him to preach; but no human authority could prevent St. Andrew from carrying out his divine mission. We may make excuses for Aegeas, an ignorant man, but can we find excuses for modern governments, that are well aware of the supreme duty of serving God? St. Andrew has brought before

the pro-consul's tribunal, and urged as apostatize, but he declared: "There is but one God . . . I offer to Him the spotless Lamb in sacrifice; when all have eaten of His flesh, He still remains whole and living." Aegeas ordered him to be imprisoned, but the people protested against the sentence and demanded the apostle's release. He, however, begged them to allow him to die.

II. **St. Andrew's martyrdom.** In compliance with the apostle's request, the people submitted, and offered no further resistance. Suffering never disturbs the Church, which invariably survives it. When St. Andrew was again brought before the tribunal, he continued to glorify Christ and to rebuke his judge for his wicked paganism. Thus St. Andrew's teaching and justifiable reproaches caused him to be condemned to die on the cross. There is an old tradition that on his way to execution he cried: "O good Cross" (Breviary Office). His cross was in the shape of the letter X. He lingered for two days on the cross, and the crowd around Him did not diminish. He encouraged the Christians to persevere, and exhorted the pagans.

Peroration. Do we love suffering, and are we ready to make sacrifices to God? Let us try to be like St. Andrew, for his was the way of salvation.

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

"What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul."—MATT. xvi. 26.

St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier were together in the students' quarter in Paris; they went to receive Holy Communion on Montmartre, and founded a new religious Order. . . .

I. **St. Francis Xavier as a religious.** A spiritual son of St. Ignatius Loyola. Fasts, vigils, scourgings with knotted cords that tore his flesh. Whilst studying at Paris, he went to shut himself up in the hospitals at Venice. "I was sick, and you visited me" (Matt. xxv. 36). To visit the sick is *Opem, re ac verbis, aegrotante impendere* (Tostat. q. 377 in Matt.). From Venice he

cession, so that we may more confidently look forward to heaven. Amen.

ST. AMBROSE

"Fulfil thy ministry."—2 TIM. iv. 5.

These three words look very simple, but they sum up the whole duty of a man who holds a responsible office. They call upon him to discharge perfectly the obligations that he has incurred, and to display in all his actions virtue, wisdom, zeal and justice. To the apostles our Lord said: "Let your light shine before men"; they were to shed light upon the nations, and St. Paul bade Timothy set a good example. Bishops should set an example to their flocks, and not only avoid heresies, but also make their people turn away from false doctrine. St. Ambrose was a light to the nations, an example to bishops, and a scourge to heretics.

I. **A light to the nations.** St. Bonaventure says of him: Like a sun, Ambrose was a light for all men, and shed light upon all, great and small, Catholics and heretics, sinners and righteous. He did this 1. by writing, 2. by preaching, 3 by his virtues.

II. **An example to superiors.** In the second book of his work on penance, St. Ambrose says of himself: "I was not worthy to be called a bishop; I am the man of least account on earth, the lowest with regard to merit." Theodoret (Hist. v. 17) records, however, a saying of the Emperor Theodosius, "I have seen no one except Ambrose truly worthy of the title of bishop." Let us consider how St. Ambrose shrank from this dignity, how he disposed of his property, and how great was the innocence of his life.

III. **A scourge to heretics.** Attila was known as the Scourge of God, because he devastated the Empire. St. Ambrose deserves the title "Scourge of heretics," because he resisted heresy for the good of the Church and the glory of God. He broke the power of the heretics, crushed their audacity and dispersed their adherents.

ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

"Be not faithless, but believing."—JOHN xx. 27.

Three points: the sin of doubting; the joy of believing; the faith of conviction.

I. **The sin of doubting.** 1. Grave in itself and in its nature. 2. Diminished by certain circumstances. 3. Beneficial in its results.

II. **The joy of believing.** His mind was enlightened, his will was filled with love, and his heart strengthened.

III. **Faith of conviction.** Proved by his words and apostolate, and by all his life work as an apostle until his martyrdom.

Peroration. Do we believe? Indifference is a kind of doubt. Let us turn to our Saviour and be honest, and prove our faith by our actions. Thus we shall deserve to go to heaven.

ST. STEPHEN

"They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—ACTS vii. 58.

The apostles were making many converts and instructing the multitude, but they could not devote sufficient time to matters affecting individuals, and especially widows, in the daily distribution of money. Consequently they chose seven conspicuously good Christians to attend to this part of the apostolic ministry, and ordained them deacons. At their head was Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He did great wonders and signs among the people, so that his wisdom and eloquence proved irresistible, and he brought about so many conversions that the Jews were alarmed, and bribed false witnesses to say that he had spoken blasphemy. This led to his martyrdom. He was arrested and dragged before the Council, where he was called upon to answer to these charges. Thereupon he explained in forcible language the opposition offered by the Jews to all true religion, show-

went to Rome, prayed at the tomb of St. Peter, and returned to Venice to be ordained. He spent forty days in preparation for his first Mass. What must have been his piety and purity! As a legate of the Holy See he displayed profound humility. When he left Rome for Goa, the Portuguese ambassador offered him attendants, and besought him to take some with him, but he replied: "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28). He himself waited upon his traveling companions. He practiced voluntary poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3). St. Augustine calls hell the kingdom of the wealthy; *de contemptu mundi,* ii. 8). St. Francis Xavier set out, taking with him his Breviary, and no clothes except what he was wearing; he lived on alms, refusing help from the king of Portugal, and sought no better accommodation than that provided at the hospices for the poor. On his arrival at Goa, he taught the children and adults, touched the hearts of wicked men, visited the sick and prisoners, and preached with zeal and fervor. "What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 14).

II. **St. Francis Xavier as an apostle.** Traveling was extremely difficult, but his zeal impelled him to traverse vast distances, always on foot and always barefoot. During the eleven years of his apostolate, he walked 11,000 leagues. Everywhere he sowed the word of God, overcame false doctrine, overthrew idols, civilized the people and converted them to the faith. He is said to have baptized 300,000, many more than heresy, during the same period, succeeded in separating from the Church. In the same century Martin of Valencia, a Franciscan, and St. Louis Bertrand, a Dominican, were accomplishing a similar work in America. Like his divine Master, St. Francis Xavier worked miracles upon devils and men, the sea and the air. Even after his death his body exhaled fragrance, and quicklime was unable to destroy it. When it was brought to Malacca, the plague then raging in the city suddenly ceased.

III. **St. Francis Xavier's work.** His travels, conversions and miracles proved him to be a true apostle, and to the apostles our Lord said: "You are the light of the world, the salt of

the earth" (Matt. v. 13, 14); "I have called you friends" (John xv. 15).

1. The light of the world. Christ called Himself also "the Light of the world" (John xiii. 12), so the apostles received their light from Him. St. Francis Xavier shed light (a) by his knowledge; besides human knowledge, he possessed that of the Church, of souls and of God, and converted the most learned idolators from their errors. (b) By his virtues. His works proved his spirit of prayer, purity, mortification, obedience and humility. His letters to his superiors were written as he knelt. (c) By his miracles; he possessed the gift of tongues, of bilocation, of healing . . . etc.

2. The salt of the earth. Without salt, food is insipid. St. Francis Xavier inspired wisdom, despised honors and worldly goods, and followed the teaching of the Gospel. He overcame vice and sowed the seed of virtue in many places. Wherever he had preached, he left behind him fervent Christians, men who were chaste, holy and humble. Half a century later his converts died as martyrs in Japan, and they have since been beatified by Pius IX.

3. The friend of God. He was so completely filled with love and zeal, that God bestowed on him the gift of tongues, as on the apostles at Pentecost, when "every man heard them speak in his own tongue" (Acts ii. 6). The same gift was conferred upon the Dominican, St. Louis Bertrand, in America. St. Francis possessed also the gift of prophecy, as is proved by several events in his life. His body remained incorrupt. "Thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Acts ii. 27). Our Lord's Body was incorrupt *propter praesentiam Verbi* (Andr. Cret.) and those of the saints remain so for His sake. The body of St. Francis Xavier, though covered with quicklime, was not destroyed

Peroration. O thou, who by thy teaching, virtues and miracles, didst shine as the light of the world; who by thy wisdom, zeal and works wert the salt of the earth; who being the friend of God didst possess the gifts of tongues, prophecy and incorruptibility, protect all those who hope in thee and ask thy inter-

ing how every prophet had been persecuted, and he went on to reproach the members of the Council with having crucified Christ not long before. At these words they raised an outcry, flung themselves upon St. Stephen, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him. He, looking up to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Being thus encouraged, he prayed for his murderers, besought our Lord to receive his spirit, and died. St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, and the first of the clergy ordained by the apostles. We may think of him as a victim, and intercessor and a protector.

I. **A victim.** St. Stephen's enemies objected to his words and works, and stoned him. They "saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel." It had not been thus when he was engaged in tending the sick, distributing alms and instructing recent converts, but when calumny, cruelty and persecution came upon him, his face was as the face of an angel. Suffering with Christ has power to transfigure us. Like his Master, Stephen *oblatus est quia ipse voluit.* He too had his Thabor. He looked up to heaven; he saw no enemies, no stones, nor did he hear the angry cries, but he beheld Jesus, standing at the right hand of God. Heaven will be the place of our bliss, where we shall see our Lord. Stephen thought heaven far more important than all his sufferings. Can we make light of things unworthy of our attention? He uttered no complaint; he had spoken about God, but was silent about himself. His actions and bearing spoke for him. If we cannot imitate our divine Lord, let us at least try to imitate His servant, St. Stephen.

II. **Intercessor for his enemies.** To love of God St. Stephen added love of his enemies. At first he stood upright, but when about to pray for them he knelt down among the stones. Their crime was great, and it behooved him to pray, and he regarded their sin as more important than his own wounds. "When praying for himself, he stood upright; when praying for those stoning him, he knelt" (St. Peter Damian). He lowered himself, thus symbolizing their fall.

For himself, "he invoked and said": for his enemies he fell on his knees and cried. God hears the utterances of the heart,

but a sinner is far away from God, and so St. Stephen cried aloud, like his divine Master. His cry for pardon proves the greatness of his love. His enemies too had cried out with a loud voice in their fury, but his charity constrained him to cry out to God on their behalf; thus he fulfilled our Lord's command: "Pray for those that persecute you."

III. **The protector of his enemies.** St. Stephen's prayer was, as St. Augustine says, *misericordissima et potentissima,* and it was answered. To it St. Paul owed his conversion. The future apostle to the Gentiles had guarded the clothes of those who stoned St. Stephen, and in this way he stoned him by the hands of them all. He deserved to perish, but, as he stood most in need of prayers, he was the first to be affected by the martyr's supplication. St. Thomas of Villanova remarks that by the merits of Stephen the martyr, Paul from being a wolf became a lamb. For many others St. Stephen obtained grace. When he was being stoned, he saw heaven open, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Cardinal Hugues says that our Lord was standing because He was ready to avenge the martyr's death. St. Stephen, understanding this, fell on his knees and cried: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." St. Peter Damian tells us that, in answer to his prayer, those who were in good faith were converted, and this was the first effect of his martyrdom. Next to our Lord's blood on the altar is the blood of martyrs. St. John saw that a door was opened in heaven (Apoc. iv. 1), but St. Stephen saw, not a door, but heaven itself open. St. Augustine tells us that this was because others were to enter there through him. At Rome there was a custom that the conqueror in the Olympic Games should enter the city by a very wide gate, specially made by removing part of the walls. So heaven was opened for St. Stephen and his converts. Christ bade His followers "do good to those that hate you," and the first martyr obeyed this command. Plutarch writes that Alexander's glory consisted in turning enemies into friends. We might say the same of St. Stephen. Once a young madman in a moment of fury fell upon Lycurgus and tore out one of his eyes; the senate gave the criminal over to the great man, for him to deal with him as he chose. All

the revenge that he took was to keep him in his own house, feeding and instructing him. St. Stephen has as his companions in heaven many of those who took his life on earth.

Alternative Plan

Three points. He preached Christ zealously, upholding His rights as the Messias and Redeemer. Cato, a pagan, says "To have kept silence hurts no one, but to have spoken is harmful." St. Stephen's preaching was vigorous and forcible; "he was not silent, nor did he waver, nor did he yield to blasphemers" (Fulgentius).

II. **He suffered with steadfastness.** Some men cannot endure truth and virtue, and to such St. Stephen was intolerable; they accused and condemned him, but he persevered; they stoned him, and he uttered no complaint, and breathed his last when overwhelmed by the stones. St. Augustine says that his charity was not overcome by the stones thrown at him.

III. **He followed his divine Master closely,** resembling Him (a) in life, by his charity, humility, spirit of prayer and virginity, (b) in death, by praying for his enemies. St. Maximus says that the sins of his persecutors caused him more pain than his own wounds, and their wickedness afflicted him more than his own death. St. Augustine remarks that he was stoned in lowliness and is crowned in glory.

Peroration. Ask St. Stephen to help us to take up our cross and follow Christ.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

"Peter therefore turning about saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following."—John xxi. 20.

Like St. Peter, let us turn and look at St. John. Our Lord loved him generously and bestowed many favors upon him; He loved him sincerely, and revealed the greatest mysteries to him; He loved him without changing, and after His death continued to give him priceless testimony of His love.

I. A generous love. Some one has said that human love *supponit*, whilst divine love *ponit*. What did our Lord's love cause Him to bestow upon St. John? A. Dignity in the Church; he was an apostle, evangelist, prophet, a martyr without losing his life, a confessor, virgin and doctor. B. His own heart as a possession. To Peter He gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven; to Thomas the favor of touching His wounds; He allowed Mary Magdalene to sit at His feet; St. John alone was permitted to rest on His heart. C. His mother. This gift was made on Calvary, and Mary Magdalene, the multitude and the Roman centurion all witnessed it. St. Thomas Aquinas says that our Lady, in virtue of being Mother of God, possesses infinite dignity, because God is infinite goodness (1a p; q. 25.—a.6). What more could our Lord have given to His disciples?

II. **A sincere love.** St. Ambrose says that a true friend hides nothing, but pours out his soul into his friend's bosom (de Offic. 1. 3, c. 19). Thus our Lord confided to St. John: A. The secret of His divinity. He stands above the other evangelists, the other apostles and all the prophets. How exalted is his language! (St. John Damasc., St. Aug., St. Bede). B. The secrets of His humanity. In Ezechiel the other three evangelists are represented by a man, a lion and a bull, but St. John by an eagle (St. Peter Damian). C. The secrets of His Church. The prophets had spoken of the Church *in speculo et in aenigmate, in visione et in somnio* (Tertullian), but, as St. Peter Damian says, St. John is *Argus universalis ecclesiae* (Serm. 4), because in his Gospel, Epistles and Apocalypse he supplies the refutation of all heresies.

III. **An unchanging love.** Our Lord proved His love for St. John. A. During life, by keeping him with Him. St. John witnessed all the miracles, and was present on Thabor, in the Cenaculum, in Gethsemani, at the Crucifixion. B. At death. St. John's life was preserved even at his martyrdom, and he lived to extreme old age. Our Lord is said to have been present visibly at his death. St. Augustine refers to a theory according to which, St. John, like Enoch and Elias, is only asleep in his tomb (Tr. 124 in Joan.), but this theory is

not generally accepted. C. After death. Christ exalted St. John to heaven, and gave him a special place, as at the Last Supper. The seven choirs of saints welcomed him as one of themselves, anchorites, virgins, doctors, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, apostles. They all give him honor, but the chief honor is to be the disciple whom Jesus loved!

Peroration. Make your choice among St. John's privileges; each will suggest some good resolution. Our Lord said: "I love them that love me." Let us love Him, and add, like St. Augustine in his Confessions: *Amicus Dei, si voluero, ecce nunc fio.* Yes, let us love God for ever.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

"Herod . . . sending killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem. —MATT. ii. 16.

Three points. Herod's wickedness, cruelty of the executioners, happiness of the children.

I. **Herod's wickedness.** He aimed at destroying the Messias, but failed. God can frustrate man's schemes; the redemption had been foretold, and the Redeemer, of whom the prophets had spoken, could not perish in infancy. The children who died had committed no sin; they were born at about the same time and in the same region as our Saviour. "Their tongues had said nothing, their eyes had seen nothing, their ears had heard nothing, their hands had done nothing, and thus they could be blamed for nothing" (St. Peter Chrys.). Their sole offence was that they had been born. Herod robbed the mothers of their children; the women too were guilty of no crime, and Herod should have been their protector, guardian and defender.

II. **Cruelty of the executioners.** The victims were innocent babes, knowing nothing of evil; the parents were not even questioned, no law had been broken, and yet the children were condemned to instant death. Tertullian points out that Herod wished to kill one child, but his emissaries, when in search of that one, killed indiscriminately. No one knows how

many perished. St. Augustine speaks of resistance offered by the mothers, and the curses uttered by them against Herod and the executioners. The slaughtered infants raised against Herod the cry for justice: "Avenge, O Christ, our blood."

III. **Happiness of the infant martyrs.** Humanly speaking they call for our pity, but as martyrs they enjoy the bliss of heaven. Grown men and women must have faith, good works and merits, but for infants it is enough that they are in the state of grace. They were martyrs without thinking of or asking for martyrdom. Every Christian hopes to be saved, but his hope ought to be based upon a firm, steadfast, effective action of the will, and this should be borne out by good works. Children, however, require nothing beyond the grace of baptism, and the baptism of blood confers this grace in the case of martyrs. St. Bernard says that just as baptism without any action of the will or the reason suffices for salvation, so does martyrdom suffered for Christ suffice for the sanctification of children.

The Holy Innocents did nothing to merit this grace, but, as the Fathers assert, martyrdom does not consist in merit, but comes by grace. It is a gift from God, together with the preventing grace which enables men to accept it, and the helping grace which enables them to bear it. Children, however, are privileged martyrs, and become such simply through the application of Christ's merits. St. Bernard writes: "If you ask what merit they brought to God to procure their coronation, tell me first what crimes they have committed in Herod's sight to procure their massacre."

PART III

SPECIAL SERMONS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

DEDICATION OF A NEW CHURCH

Temples reared to the Supreme Being all the world over prove the general belief in, and duty of, divine worship. False or grotesque forms of worship no proof against true. Religion a witness to God. To-day's function, an answer to our need of worship. Notwithstanding, how little is God really known and loved. Has He other witnesses on earth besides buildings of stone? Men engrossed in matter and impressions of matter. Yet is God known and witnessed to, I, in nature; II, in heart; and, III, in Catholic Church—three great witnesses to God in the world.

1. **Nature or creation a great temple of the living God.** "His invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen" (Rom. i. 20). Ordered and rational world needs intelligent cause. Play of atoms would never shape into a cathedral, nor letters shaken in urn into a book. Atheism a disease. Not outcome of thought. *"Dixit insipiens in cordi suo non est Deus."* God not only intelligent and powerful, but holy, loving. "Our Father in heaven." *"Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei; opera manuum ejus annuntiat firmamentum."*

2. **Heart also reveals God.** In His temple. Mind of best men has ever read God in nature. Worst types, too, in universality of conscience. Words for duty, right, wrong, in all languages. Law traced in heart ere committed to bronze and stone.

3. **Nature and heart open books to all,** yet contents disputed. Hence need for authoritative, outward voice to interpret and decide, and witness to things of God. Anarchy would reign, in spite of ideas of order and justice, without a State. Israel, prophets. Christ and Church a "kingdom of God." Court of appeal. Lighthouse of world. To read God in nature and heart must obey Church. Brought home to us concretely in this building. Lessons. We are all stones in living Church. Exhortation to worthy membership.

A PRIEST'S FIRST MASS

Honor due to all, grounded on recognition of man's worth and dignity in sight of God. Should be inward, rooted like true charity, in God. What to-day's function implies. The honor due to offices and person of priest, as one in whom Christ lives, teaches, and works. Rank and power founts of honor. Let us consider: 1. Rank of priest in Kingdom of God. 2. His power in same.

1. **Order in Church,** as in State, requires mission, priest an envoy of God to people under his charge. "As the Father hath sent me, so do I send you" (John xx. 21). Embassy comes direct from Christ, through Bishop and Pope. Not self-appointed. Need of true vocation. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16). Charges of love of place and influence brought against priesthood unfounded.

2. **Power of priest.** Apparent extravagance of Christ's claims. His power still in energy among us, in triple function of priest, Word, Sacrifice, Sacraments. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. lv. 1). How this triple power exercised. World and life, mysterious and wonderful; not surprising that hidden spiritual life should be more so. High ideal of conduct and belief ever upheld by priest both by teaching and examples. Priest may lapse from grace, as did Judas, Peter.

Conclusion. Exhort to duty of praying for priests, and profiting by their sacred ministry.

The Dignity of the Priesthood

The priesthood of the Catholic Church, the ministry of Jesus Christ suggested by this holy Mass—what mind can comprehend it, what tongue can describe the honors and prerogatives of this exalted vocation? Scholars, doctors and saints of the Universal Church have acknowledged their utter inability to express the sublime dignity of the priesthood. In the words of St. Ephrem, "I must exclaim, O, glorious miracle, O, ineffable power, O, tremendous mystery of the holy and sublime priesthood, most venerable and without blemish, with which Christ coming into this world has vouchsafed to clothe His creatures. On bended knees, with sighs and tears, I should beg grace to comprehend this celestial gift, a treasure indeed to those who guard it worthily and holily." If such be the language of a saint, where can I expect to find words and thoughts to speak fittingly of this sublime Sacrament? The deference and respect of all ages for the good Catholic priest is the tribute from every age and from every people to his supernatural character. Nature and God separate the priest from other men as an ideal, and a cry of horror escapes the lips when it is discovered that he is not all that he was set apart for. The priest is the representative of Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the Mass, in the confessional, and in his other divine offices. The priest in his office of preaching is charged with the most vital and momentous themes that man has ever been commissioned to announce. If this office is realized, it will also be realized what great graces are necessary for the proper fulfillment of this divine office, hence you will understand why I ask you for your prayers for this young priest, that God may graciously give him the graces sufficient to be worthy of this great privilege to perform the duties of the priesthood in a manner worthy of Him, to save the souls confided to his care, so that he may one day be worthy with us all to hear the sweet Master's voice calling, "Well done, my good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over little things, I will place thee over much, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

FAREWELL DISCOURSE ON PASTOR'S CALL TO ANOTHER MISSION

Pain of parting from friends and scenes that are dear, human. Even saints subject to it. St. Paul and Ephesians (Acts xx. 38), Timothy, Lazarus. Burden of what I say to-day is goodby, i.e., "God be with you" all.

1. First let me say **farewell to children of the parish.** Remember my counsels: Be obedient to God, your parents, the Church. Do not forget baptismal promises. Frequent sacraments. Consult interests of soul in choice of state of life, companions, and the rest.

2. **Farewell, Christian parents.** In all relations of life as husbands and wives—parents and citizens, "walk worthy of your vocation to the House of God—the Church." Be patient with each other—train children to be fit members of Church—living stones when we all are gone. Let no human creature or interest dethrone God in your hearts. Life a journey. We are but guests of a day.

3. **Farewell, pious souls,** stay and support of pastor and light to your fellow-parishioners. God bless your generosity. May your light go on increasing to perfect day.

4. **Farewell, sinners.** Personally I love you. Your vices only I denounced. Awake from lethargy of sin whilst there is still time.

5. **A word personally.** Notwithstanding my many faults, had ever at heart your best interests. Forgive my shortcomings, pray for me. Grant to my successor same hearty measure of loyalty and kindness shown to me. Same word and ministry carries on in my absence—a joy that we are all one, in Faith, Hope, and Charity.

A PRIEST'S SILVER JUBILEE

Note both of sadness and joy on this occasion. Rapid flight of time and approach to life's end; but joy predominant. Why? Text that comes home both as warning and consolation to

priest is that wherein our Lord tells His disciples they are, 1, "the salt of the earth"; 2, "the light of the world."

1. **The priesthood the salt of the earth.** Knowledge of God and moral law man's inheritance. Ideas of justice, purity, mercy, truth, and charity inherent in world. But how far would their influence extend without voice of priest? Bad literature, all the forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil to counteract. Priest God's agent in this work. His voice and influence ever raised against evil. Christ still lives and acts through priest. It was said by prophet, "I will give you pastors according to my own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine" (Jer. iii. 15). Men ever drifting toward materialism. Priest sent to remind them that "not alone by bread doth man live."

2. **"Light of world."** Each mission and church a moral lighthouse. Priest ever holds up torch of truth and morality. Reason and culture, as experience shows, no substitute for religion. Christ's light and power in voice and hand of priest to teach and heal. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life." Obedience to authority not blind; binds but does not enslave. Priest's light and power for all. His life one of self-sacrifice for God and his people. "His own light must shine" before men.

Conclusion: Exhort to due respect for Church and pastors, to gain fruits of their ministry.

THE PROFESSION OF A RELIGIOUS

The ceremony of the profession of a Religious is, first of all, a confession and profession of the supremacy of God. God above everything. A beautiful vision presented on an occasion like this, when a young woman with vigor and strength of mind, without compulsion of any kind, indeed at times in the face of strong opposition, comes before God and says to Him, "Thou hast commanded me, O Lord, here I am, do with me as thou wilt." This is the spirit of the Religious who consecrates herself to the service of God. God demands service of everyone, no one may escape it. There

is a general service binding on every one, but not every one is called to the closer and more intimate service. This is a privilege granted only to the few. To all who rightfully enter upon this service the Lord says, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." There are prevalent in the world many false notions on the subject of the motives that influence people who seek admission into the Religious life. It is not disappointment, it is not a false view of life, it is not a disappointed vision occasioned by incomplete knowledge, it is not even a disgust of the coarseness and insincerity of the world, though this may be a contributing case. It is not ease, or comfort, or escape from worry, or such like. No, people do not enter the Religious life from such motives. Few people stop to think of the deliberation usually preceding such a choice of life. Those contemplating entering the Religious life are not satisfied with their own judgment but they seek counsel of others, they seek counsel, above all, by earnest prayer to God, and more precautions are usually taken with this step than for almost any other step in life. The final decision comes from the realization of a vocation, of a call from God, and in answer to this call thousands every year renounce the world with its joys, its possessions, its indulgences, yes, they renounce their very selves, their own wills and bind themselves to poverty, chastity and obedience, that they may give to God a more perfect service. It is our privilege this morning to assist at a most edifying ceremony. A thought came to the mind of this sister and took complete possession of it, and, leaving all things, she came to this monastery, and with joy and in great humility puts the seal of consecration upon the deliberate choice which she made of God. Congratulations. Warning that the work has only begun, that it will after all in the Religious life be her own part that will sanctify her.

ADDRESS AT A MARRIAGE

Marriage was instituted and established by God Himself in the Paradise, when He created a helpmate for Adam. There

is another reason why the marriage bond is sacred. Matrimony is a sacrament. It is one of those sacred channels through which the grace of Jesus Christ flows into the hearts of the faithful. Duties of the husband. True, sincere and enduring love of the wife, require nothing that is unworthy, and bear the little imperfections of which the best of us are not entirely free.

Duties of the wife. Do not neglect your home but make it a place of domestic happiness. Make your beloved husband happy. Stand by his side as a faithful helpmate. Share his joys with sincere sympathy, and when troubles come, as they are bound to come, comfort the husband and place in him courage and confidence. Make the home the safe refuge for the busy husband when the world's affairs are stormy.

GRADUATING EXERCISES IN GIRLS' SCHOOLS

1. **Like a process of selection** making or marring, doing or undoing. Fittest survive. The school a picture of life. Some pass the tests and are crowned. Others through no fault of theirs fall short but in reality gain. Failure often success in disguise. The third section through their own fault fail, lose, and are cast aside.

2. **Education does not end with school.** Life foreground and training camp for eternity. Church the greatest school of Christ. Leaving school only passing from one class to another in world-wide school. Lack of wealth, talent and influence no bar to progress. Good will and hard work only required, grace does rest. Our Lady, the saints, all pupils in this school. They our models for imitation. Foolish virgins. Grace of God and good conduct more important than culture. Education often one-sided. To be a good scholar one must be free from grave sin and abound with virtue.

Conclusion. Appeal to give oneself to God. He will fill us with grace and dispositions and character so that, for time and eternity, we may be sanctified and profitable to the Lord.

GRADUATING EXERCISES IN BOYS' SCHOOLS

Manliness admired by all. Not limited to physical bravery. We will consider to-day the noble kind of courage, namely the moral courage required to say *No* to evil in all its forms.

1. **The need of moral courage.** Physical courage common enough, but moral rare. St. Peter was brave against soldiers but he was a coward in presence of a maid-servant. Pilate knew Christ to be innocent, yet dared not say *no* and thus Jesus was given over to the fury of the mob. Nearly all of us at times play the part of Pilate. In the dark hours of the Passion the Apostles wavered and fled. Only two or three manly or fearless souls held their ground. So, in history, Christ's cause in many lands lost through fear. The manly few have saved it in others.

2. **The need of high principles.** Touchstone of manliness. Must be practical. Many who seem pillars of strength fail in moments of trial, others, from whom least expected, rise to heroism. Why? Most afraid of great moral bullies, the world, the flesh and the devil.

3. **In what sense are we to say No** to the world, to passion, prejudice, and sense? How must we oppose evil presented by eye, ear and unruly senses generally?

Conclusion. Exhort to manly resistance to all spiritual foes.

LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF A NEW SCHOOL

The erection of a new parish school building is significant of careful thought on the subject of education. With an excellent and comprehensive school system provided by the State, the question has been asked: why is it necessary for any one body of citizens to found and support an education separate and distinct from that supported by the State. The answer is simple and conclusive. It is because the education offered in the public school is entirely devoid of religion in theory, and such as is taught in practice is either hostile to the true faith or inadequate for its proper exposition. The

erection of Catholic schools in every Catholic parish has been prescribed by the Plenary Councils held in this country, and the mere fact that such action was taken is sufficient evidence of its necessity. Modern society has no positive moral or ascetic theory of its own. If it has, it regards courage, loftiness of spirit, zeal for political liberty, the honor of the flag, love of science, as infinitely higher virtues than humility, purity, charity, mortification, and the fear or love of God. The common experience of all right-thinking men will bear out the truth of this statement. The fact is whatever there be of good, and thanks be to God there is much of good in our American civilization, attains its ends by reason of the impetus left from the days when Christianity was the living principle of all our actions. The one real effective and permanent barrier to the relapse and to a Pagan, or worse than Pagan, life is the Catholic Church. In studying the causes of the strength of Catholicity from a worldly point of view, it is apparent that care for the education of the young has been one of her most effective aids. Her enemies know this, hence their strong opposition.

ADVENT

First Course of Advent Sermons

I. *Knowledge of Christ.* "The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (John i. 10). 1. What Christ is for the world—the Messias, Redeemer—the God-man—the human race was sunk in darkness. In the world Christ holds the chief place, by His teaching, institutions and authority. 2. How the world resists Christ. Some just acknowledge that there is a God, but go no further, and try to ignore Christ, in spite of what He has done. They deny the true interpretation of the Gospel, the sanctity of His moral teaching, the obedience due to His Church, and they refuse to believe His revelation. Nevertheless His spirit and words never pass away.

II. *The work accomplished by Christ.* Read and comment upon the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Advent. Consider His works throughout the centuries of Christianity; His words, never

did anyone in the world speak like Him; His teaching far surpasses that of all the philosophers; His example stands alone and unrivalled; His help and grace raise His followers above all the learned men of the world. Consider how the world has withstood Christ, rejecting the Gospel, opposing the kingdom of heaven, denying eternity, and setting up false maxims which are obstacles to Christianity and imperil the salvation of men.

III. *The Church of Christ.* What the Church is (Catechism). She possesses unity of faith, culture and government. She is holy. Holiness proceeds from God and characterizes her doctrine, precepts, and sacraments, and constitutes the holiness of Christians. She is Catholic, universal, unchanging, undying.

IV. *Prophecies relating to Christ and their fulfilment. Rorate, caeli, desuper . . .* (Is. xlv). God's promises to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; repeated by Moses, Jeremias, Isaias, Daniel, Amos. . . . Our Lord fulfilled these prophecies: "The end of the law is Christ, unto justice to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). The sceptre departed from Juda, the weeks of years announced by Daniel, the special character described by various prophets, the sufferings foretold by Isaias, the destruction of the Temple. To no one else do the prophecies apply.

V. *Christ, the lawgiver of the world.* Men were forgetting God, the natural law was violated, and one nation was set apart to prepare the way of a Saviour and Redeemer. Christ civilized the world. Before His coming there was almost nothing in the doctrines of religion, but He brought a divine revelation. In His religion are sacraments which raise men to supernatural heights, and it has effected the transformation of the nations. Christ's teaching regarding God and man gives light to our minds; His doctrines have raised the morality of individuals, families and society, and give strength to our wills. He, knowing our need of submission to God, has given us a form of worship based on sacrifice, accompanied by prayers, and carried out by a specially ordained priesthood.

Second Course of Advent Sermons

I. *The Reason for Christianity.* "God so loved the world" (John iii. 16). Man is something more than a creature who is

born, lives and dies. His soul aspires to something higher. God sent His Son. Man needs religion, and received that of Christ. Human philosophy is powerless. The ancient philosophers neither knew nor could know the truth. Modern philosophy contains loftier ideas because it exists amidst Catholic surroundings, otherwise it is still on a low level. Men required instruction from God, who came on earth to draw them to Himself. Philosophers failed to take into account nature, history and the Word of God. Truly learned men discover God's traces everywhere; large-minded politicians perceive His action, and well-instructed Christians see it. Hence let us have faith in God's works, for He created unity, historical certainty and power. He spoke through the creation, revealed Himself through the prophets, became Incarnate, founded the Church, sent out the apostles, and thus gave men uniformity of belief, divine morality, fraternity.

II. *Catholicism.* The Church exists. In spite of persecutions, heresies, immoral passions and false doctrines, the Church stands firm, with her mission, belief and laws unchanged. She has stood for 1900 years and her divine Founder promised her immortality. The doctrines of independent morality, free thought and alleged new rights are *false.* The Church alone has civilized the nations, abolished slavery, upheld the liberties and moulded the consciences of men. She stands with her divinely established hierarchy, her doctrine; she is universal, in course of time savage races submitted to her, and the world became Christian. If our religion were of human origin, it would be imperfect, as is proved by the various heresies; their apparent vitality is due to the fact that traces of Catholicism remain in them. Like ourselves, the Church consists of body and soul; persecutions have slain her members, but they have not destroyed her doctrine, rights and laws. God has ordered it thus, she lives on and her unity is indestructible. We need feel no fear.

III. *Authority of the Church.* "He that heareth you, heareth me." The Church is a society. Her rulers command and the members obey; hence we find that she possesses constitutive principles of government, and power to exercise her authority.

1. *Constitutive principles.* In the world she possesses a kind

of authority called ascendency or prestige, as well as authority based on right and reason in the stricter sense.

Whence does the Church derive her authority? The apostles were ordinary men, unlearned and of no reputation, but twelve wise philosophers or twelve mighty potentates have never accomplished so great a work. Her authority is derived from God, the supreme Lord of all. It has three functions, teaching, administrative, and governing. Every society has some kind of doctrine and some administrative machinery. Government comprises power to legislate, to judge and to coerce; so we have decrees issued by the Holy See, the Canon Law, and various regulations.

2. *Exercise of authority.* Principles have to be put into practice. The Church has a right to teach, administer justice to and govern her members. Holy Scripture is not a sufficient rule for a Christian, since each man may choose what he likes and neglect the rest. Our Lord did not tell His followers to write and teach others to read His doctrine, but to go and preach, and teach them to observe His precepts. He did not seek the authorization of the Sanhedrin or of the Council, nor did the apostles; in fact they were absolutely forbidden to preach, but they paid no attention. History records their triumph over their opponents, and the permanence of their success. We are now in the 20th Century; what other authority has ever lasted so long, or been so widely extended, or accomplished such great works?

IV. *The work of the Messias.* 1. The Law of Moses was to disappear and Christianity was to take its place. The Mosaic Law was intended to be temporary. It promised (a) a new lawgiver and a new covenant. "The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a Prophet . . . Him thou shalt hear" (Deut. xviii. 15). "I will make a new covenant with . . . Israel and . . . Juda" (Jer. xxxi. 31). (b) a new sacrifice and priesthood (Is. lxvi. 18; Dan. ix. 27; Mal. i. 11; Amos v.). (c) The rejection of the Jewish people, "Christ shall be slain, and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His" (Dan. ix. 26). (d) A religion for all nations. (Osee ii. 24; Mal. i.) "I will say to that which was not my people: Thou art my people" (Osee ii. 24).

2. Christianity was to take the place of the Mosaic Law. In the year A. D. 70 Jerusalem was taken and destroyed, as our Lord

had foretold. The ruin of the temple showed that the Messias had come, and the dispersion of the Jews marked the real end of the Mosaic Law. All the prophecies were fulfilled; the world listened to Christ, the new prophet foretold by Moses himself; the new Covenant is Christianity; Israel and Juda no longer occupy Palestine; Christ's teaching has reached all nations. Our Lord sent apostles to teach all nations; their mission has been fulfilled, and the work of the Messias is accomplished.

V. *The Song of the Angels.* Glory to God; Peace to men.

1. *Glory to God.* There were three evils in the religious systems of the ancient world. (a) *Idolatry.* Our Lord destroyed paganism, honored God, and through the hypostatic union made Him reparation. (b) *Philosophy.* Our Lord taught men to know the one true God, to understand His Providence, and to admire His wisdom in governing the world. (c) *Judaism,* which led men to think only of material welfare. But Christ told us to worship God in spirit and in truth, thus establishing a higher religion. He inspired men to sacrifice everything, even life itself, and He condemned the Pharisees and publicans.

2. *Peace to men.* Three chief enemies: *pride,* which exalts a man in his own opinion, and makes him fancy himself superior to others; *self-indulgence,* which lowers his dignity, since passions are always degrading; *hatred,* which makes him detest his opponents, and in many cases treat them with cruelty. In order that we may resist these enemies Christ gives us *grace,* which proves our need of God and humbles our pride; *His doctrine,* which lifts us above the things of earth, and has overthrown the self-indulgence of paganism; *His example* of mercy towards others.

LENT

Suggested Subjects for Courses of Sermons

First Course

1. The Church and the Nations (Christ's replies to the tempter).
2. The Church and human liberty.
3. Christ, the lawgiver of the world.

4. National Christianity.
5. Indifference and unbelief.
6. The Church and the Holy Eucharist.

Second Course

1. The devil's opposition to Christ and the Church.
2. Reasons for belief.
3. The necessity of the Church of Christ.
4. The Preaching of Christ.
5. The Apostolicity of the Church.
6. Civilization through the Church.
7. Indifference, a modern error.
8. A good Catholic's attitude towards the faith.
9. The Vicar of Christ.
10. Respect for churches.
11. Triumph of Christ and the Church.

MISSIONS AND RETREATS

First Outline Course of Mission Sermons

1. *The Word of God* (a) instructs the ignorant, (b) rebukes sinners, (c) makes perfect the just; hence it leads men to live as Christians in this world, and aims at their eternal salvation.

2. *Salvation.* Our own, personal, all-important business. We ought to work for it now, carefully, in God's sight. Sin is the great obstacle.

3. *Sin.* (a) God's enemy, since it is an insult to Him. (b) Man's enemy, since it brings many evils upon him. (c) It is the one supreme evil in this life and the next and causes remorse of conscience.

4. *Remorse of conscience.* (a) A false conscience causes us to sin through human respect, error of judgment, passion. (b) Hypocrisy robs men of true piety, renders their good works fruitless and arouses the wrath of God. (c) A good conscience restores peace of mind, makes us understand the hideous nature

of sin, and brings us back to the principles of Christianity and the law of God. Hence the necessity of penance.

5. *Necessity of penance.* It is necessary to a sinner for two reasons: justice with regard to God, a remedy for himself. It is necessary for a just man; he has not always preserved his innocence; many faults escape his notice; he requires mortification in order to secure final perseverance. Neither the good nor the wicked should defer repentance.

6. *Postponement of penance and conversion.* During postponement three things tend to make us fall back into sin: the force of habit, the power of the devil, our corrupt inclinations, arising from the misuse of our faculties. At the end of such a postponement conversion is uncertain and more difficult, the grace of God less efficacious, the will weaker. Let us therefore make haste to do what God requires of us.

7. *Grounds for repentance.* (a) Fear. We know that we have sinned; God's justice is inexorable, our best works are imperfect, and only pure souls are fit for heaven. (b) Confidence. We were redeemed on Calvary, and the sacraments are designed to sanctify us. In this life God is merciful; many great saints were at one time sinners; our good will draws down upon us the grace of God.

8. *Death.* Three points. (a) The moment of death, terrible in its nature, decisive in its consequences, prolific of results to families and society. (b) The thought of death detaches us from the world, checks our passions, is a pledge of a holier life. (c) The thought of ourselves; are we ready to die? We are sinners, and we do not know whether we have done penance for our sins; even the just are filled with fear.

9. *The particular Judgment.* Two accounts: (a) The benefits bestowed upon us, favors of nature, fortune and grace: (b) The evil that we have committed; our own faults, bad example, bad advice, complicity in the sins of others . . . What sentence have we to expect?

10. *Hell.* A condemned soul is most miserable. It is deprived of all advantages, spiritual, temporal and eternal; it is overwhelmed with all evils; cut off from God, our sovereign Good; cursed by God, the most severe condemnation; burnt by fire,

which inexorably punishes sin in our members, senses and faculties, torturing especially whatever has been the instrument of sin; it is tormented without respite, without alleviation of its agony, without any possibility of mercy or hope of cessation, and it suffers in the company of devils and other lost souls.

11. *Heaven.* God has prepared good things for our body, soul and spirit; happiness so infinite that we shall appreciate it more and more; perfect holiness, true knowledge, unchanging glory, and participation in His own divine life. Sin can deprive us of all this.

12. *The mercy of God.* Three points. (a) It is waiting for us, in spite of sickness, accidents and the snares of the devil, God still gives us time. (b) It invites us. Think of the beautiful parables in the Gospel, the good examples and good advice that are given to us, the voice of conscience, the beauty of goodness. (c) It welcomes us, and grants us absolution if we truly repent; it increases the graces bestowed upon faithful Catholics, and it affords to those, who truly love God, consolations that are a foretaste of the joys of heaven. It is, in God, generosity and strength.

13. *The tribunal of penance* is where God usually shows His mercy. He requires us to confess our sins, this is His right, and He imposes the duty upon all without exception. The confessional, in some form or another, has existed from the beginning, and the Church insists upon its importance and necessity. It is there that the conscience is set straight, courage restored and virtue perfected. Christ placed in the confessional two types of men previously unknown; a sinner who accuses himself, instead of being accused and denounced by others, a delegate of His mercy who gives absolution, instead of a judge uttering sentence of condemnation. Will you not repent and come?

14. *The qualities of confession,* necessary if we are to recover the state of grace. See the Catechism. Confession must be humble, sincere, complete and unreserved. Contrition, perfect or imperfect, interior, supernatural, universal and sovereign.

15. *Parable of the Prodigal Son.* His behavior shows that sin cuts us off from God, leaves us very little power to return to Him, tortures the sinner and renders him contemptible in the sight of

others. The father's action is a type of God's mercy, which restores grace to the sinner, fills him with consolation, raises him from his degradation and gives back to him his right to heaven.

16. *Holy Communion,* a gift of God and pledge of salvation. (a) A gift containing the grace, words and heart of Jesus; (b) A permanent gift, always present on the altar . . . (c) A universal gift, for Catholics of all nations. (d) A pledge of salvation, uniting us to Christ, strengthening the life of grace within us, weakening our passions, and implanting the seed of a glorious resurrection.

17. *Perseverance.* We shall always have to avoid sin, practice our religion and serve God. Life is like a voyage. Perseverance is a virtue and the gate of heaven. We must persevere; our gratitude towards God requires it of us, and it is a spiritual and temporal benefit to us. How are we to persevere? By being faithful to our duties as Christians, by resolving to resist sin, by showing courage in doing right, by keeping Sunday holy, by receiving Holy Communion on all the great festivals, and by living as genuine followers of Christ.

Second Course of Sermons for a Mission

(Subjects taken from the present volume.)

1. The Word of God.
2. Religion: the way, the truth and the life.
3. Knowledge of Christ.
4. Irreligion in the individual, in the family, in society.
5. Human Respect.
6. The Christian life in the ordinary man, the hero, the saint.
7. The future life; God, history, conscience.
8. Faith and the spirit of faith.
9. Sin.
10. Postponement of conversion.
11. The mercy of God.
12. Repentance and confession.
13. Death and burial.
14. Respectability, according to the world's opinion.

15. The Ten Commandments.
16. Devotions for the dead.
17. Devotion to our Lady.
18. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist.
19. The authority of the Church.
20. Perseverance.

A RETREAT

Introductory Sermon

"Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."—Rom. ii. 13.

It is a great thing to know your religion, but it is far more important to practice it. Your presence here shows your desire to lead a Christian life and to practice your religion more perfectly. A retreat is intended to instruct you, and to dispose and encourage you to persevere. Let us consider first what a retreat is, and what effects it should produce.

I. St. Paul says (2 Tim. iii. 16) that all scripture is profitable to teach, to correct, to strengthen in justice. (a) To teach. You know your religion and your duties in life, but it is well to insist upon them, and as it were, to learn them over again. You need intelligence to apply the instruction, good will to strengthen you and a practical conclusion to be drawn from it. (b) To correct. Be frank; you have committed faults that you remember, and can now judge more truly than in the past. They have done no good, but have been useless and really harmful, and so you desire not to fall into them again, and feel remorse for what you have done. *Sermo Dei adversarius tuus est* (St. Augustine). (c) To strengthen. The contemplation of and sorrow for past sins, and a better comprehension of your duties. . . . "All thy commandments are justice" (Ps. 118, 172); they are right in the eyes of all who desire to understand them, and fair in the eyes of those who find out their true meaning.

II. Effects. (a) Readiness to receive instruction. We ought to listen attentively to the Word of God, receiving it "not as

the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God" (2 Thess. ii. 13). We make it null and void if we fail to apply ourselves. (b) We ought to meditate upon what it contains. "Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds" (Deut. xi. 18): Why? In order to avoid sin more easily. "Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee" (Ps. 118, 11). St. John Chrysostom reminds us to carry home with us always something that we have learnt from the sermon. (c) We ought to put our good resolutions into practice. God speaks for us to hear. "If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed" (John viii. 31). It contains commands, "Do this and thou shalt live"; good examples, "Go, and do thou likewise." To the woman who praised His mother, our Lord replied: "Yea rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke xi. 28).

Alternative Plan for an Introductory Sermon

What is the good of a retreat? You leave your ordinary occupations, and leave everything and everybody in answer to the call: *Exite de medio eorum et separamini.* Hence it behooves you not to give way to distractions, but to spend your time in studying yourselves and in removing the obstacles that lie in the way of your leading holy lives. How ought a retreat to be made? By means of care and good will; recollection, peace of mind, meditation, prayer. God will give you His choicest graces. These are days of mercy, loving pleasure and goodness on His part.

I. The End of Man

"God created man to His own image."—Gen. i. 27.

These words occur at the beginning of the Bible. Everything proceeds from God, was made by God, and should redound to the glory of God. Man ought to praise, honor and serve God; this is the best way of attaining to everlasting salvation. Three points: I come from God; I belong to God, I exist for God.

I. **I come from God.** When I had no existence He gave me

life; until He thus created me, the smallest insect, the least grain of dust was worth more than I. Millions of other beings might have been created; God's power is infinite, and He creates what He will; He chose to create me. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3). He called me to be a Christian. "What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17). It is indeed from God that we proceed: "O Lord . . . Thou hast formed me" (Ps. 138, 5). Our parents are His agents; the mother of the Machabees said to her sons: "I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life . . . but the creator of the world" (2 Mach. vii. 22, 23). Hence we owe God a debt of gratitude. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee" (Ps. cii. 2).

II. **I belong to God.** Being His work, we belong to Him and are bound to honor and serve Him. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). Nothing except sins. His dominion over us is therefore *essential,* because He is our Creator, *supreme,* far above that of our fellow men, *absolute,* until He takes away our life, *irresistible,* as we cannot escape it, *eternal* in this world and the next. Judith exclaimed: "O Lord, great art Thou and glorious in Thy power; and no one can overcome Thee. Let all Thy creatures serve Thee, because Thou hast spoken and they were made" (Jud. xvi. 16).

III. **I exist for God.** He says: "I am the beginning and the end" (Apoc. i. 8). "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). Everything in us is imperfect, therefore we must look higher. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" The whole world replies: *Vanitas vanitatum . . . praeter amare Deum, et illi soli servire* (*de Imit. Christi*). What can we give Him? Our actions, for He has a right to them; ourselves, everything. We must refuse Him nothing, and He promises us Heaven as our reward. "It is good for me to adhere to my God" (Ps. lxxii. 28).

II. Sin

Sin encourages man's lower nature and is opposed to the supernatural state to which we are called. Two points: its malice; its effects.

I. **The Malice of sin, with reference to God.** Sin is an insult to God, our Creator and Ruler. A sinner is so small, as it were, a speck of dust in rebellion, but the matter of sin is a transgression of God's law, and its motives are illusory and fancied delights. Sin offends God in all His attributes. The Trinity is composed of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. As a Ruler, God is our lawgiver, judge, and sovereign; in His perfections He is supreme, and a sinner is the slave of his own passions. He is perfect, and a sinner prefers wicked trifles to Him; He is wise, and men turn away from Him; He is just, and men defy Him; He is merciful, and men scorn Him. God is wronged by men. One man will respect, fear and obey another, but does he fear God? He claims his dues of others, but resists God; sometimes he sacrifices himself for others, but will give nothing to God; he makes many promises to God, and always returns to his sins. From God he has received nothing but good, and yet he constantly offends Him.

II. **The effects of sin,** with reference to man. Sin robs us of God's friendship. Like Lucifer we say that we will not serve Him, and His reply is: "I know you not." Sin deprives us of the gifts of grace. The soul loses its beauty and is disfigured; it loses all merit, so that the way to heaven is barred and that to hell is opened; it loses all power of gaining merit, and becomes God's enemy. Contrition alone can reconcile the soul with Him. "If I have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 2). Sin destroys our liberty and reduces us to slavery. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17), but "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin" (John viii. 34). The sinner has no place, but is at the mercy of every form of sin, bidding him "Go, and he goeth; come, and he cometh; do this, and he doth it" (Luke vii. 8). The demands made upon him by sin can never be satisfied. Sin takes away all peace of mind. The soul is troubled by the remembrance of sin. "There is no peace to the wicked" (Is. xlviii. 57). Remorse gnaws at his conscience. Think of Cain, of Balthassar in the midst of his amusements. David often speaks of the sinner's lack of peace.

Sin destroys the life of the soul, and spiritual death overtakes

a spiritual being. It separates the soul from God, just as physical death separates the soul from the body. Lucifer is no longer alive in God's sight, nor is any soul in mortal sin; it is a spiritual corpse, its faculties are dead. A sinner, as far as religion goes, can do absolutely nothing. A dead body decays. Sinners are a disgrace, a shame, outcasts.

III. The Prodigal Son

Three points; he went away, came back, and was welcomed.

I. **He went away.** The sinner cuts himself off from God. The prodigal was young. Youth is the time of illusions, when we are in love with pleasures and amusements, and impatient of all restraint. Call to mind the disorders of your past life and your craving for independence.

The prodigal asked for his share of the inheritance. He was overhasty, since his father was still alive. We cannot enjoy what we have done nothing to acquire. He showed ingratitude and want of consideration for his family and especially for his old father, who had a right to his work and care. He displayed great folly and rashness; being quite without experience, he was sure to waste his property and come to ruin. Consider how you are going to employ your heart and faculties, if you are alienated from God. He went to a distant country. If he had stayed nearer home, he might have been watched over and counselled. A sinner avoids good advice, the company of good men, and the sacraments . . . he went far enough to be independent, and free from all control. What about you? . . . He wasted his substance. His fortune was earned by his father's labor, but it was not inexhaustible, and he threw it away. Think what God has done for you on Calvary, in the Church, the grace of the sacraments. He was obliged to become a swineherd. So extreme was his poverty, that he was starving—no more pleasures, not even enough bread. He had aimed at freedom, and saw himself forced to serve a stranger. Why had he not remained at home? A sinner becomes the slave of his inclinations, his senses, the world and the devil. Think of the prodigal's degradation. The son of a respectable

family had to accept the lowest kind of work and to suffer hunger, since he could not eat acorns. In the same way a degraded sinner can no longer enjoy any pleasures, and envies those of others. "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts" (Ps. xlviii. 13).

II. **He came back.** The sinner is about to be converted. When he had lost everything, he thought at last of his father. He bethought himself. What do you gain by holding aloof from God? Nothing but spurious gratification, poisoned by ingratitude, if not by treachery. He thought of the servants at home, and of the good treatment that they received, whilst he was starving. "Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me?" (Job xxix. 2). At last he made up his mind; he remembered that he still had a father, whose heart was full of tenderness. He felt no fear, no false shame, no regret for what he was giving up. He confessed that he had sinned against both God and his father. Some of our sins are notorious, there is no secret about them, but others are known to God alone. To both God and his father the prodigal declared: "I am not now worthy to be called thy son."

III. **He was welcomed.** Where God sees contrition, He pardons. His father saw him and was moved with compassion. He forgot his bad behavior, and remembered only that he was his son. God is willing to forget our sins and to heal our souls. The father ran to him and kissed him. The young man, ragged, exhausted, anxious, was coming forward slowly; the father, though older, ran. Let no sinner delay to come; God in His mercy is approaching him with abundant grace.

The father gave orders to the servants. He not only forgave his son, but restored him to his former position. He uttered no reproaches, but lavished care upon him. In the same way God gives back to us without delay all our former graces and merits. The feast—great rejoicing over the son that was lost and found again. It is the type of our absolution, spiritual resurrection, the Eucharist.

Peroration. Never give way to despair.

IV. Knowledge of Religion

"Come, children, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Ps. xxxiii. 12.

Hitherto we have dealt with preliminary subjects; now let us examine more closely some religious questions, taking first the knowledge of religion, the reasons for and the means of acquiring it.

I. **Reasons for acquiring it.** These are three in number.

1. God commands it. Long ago He rescued His people from Egypt, promised them a glorious destiny and gave them His law, in which children were to be instructed from generation to generation. The Israelites were told to meditate seriously on their obligations by day and by night. In the book of Isaias God complains that they did not study His law (xxx. 2). Under the new law Christ commanded His apostles to go and teach all nations in the name of His divine authority (Matt. xxviii. 20). Preaching is made the foundation of the perpetuity of the Church: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14). But if there must be preachers, there must also be hearers. . . . The Church is bound to preach and teach, it is your duty to listen and to receive instruction.

2. Knowledge of religion is necessary. Nothing can be equally important; we must know God, be sure why He created us, understand what worship we owe Him, what commandments He lays upon us, what reward He is preparing for us, and by what means we can infallibly obtain it. God gives us the right dispositions of heart and mind: are we true to His grace? He causes the Church to teach us His truths. "Faith cometh by hearing." He bids us keep His law: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17), that is to say: "live as a Christian in this world in order to enjoy divine happiness in heaven." God shows us what good we have to do, what evil to avoid, what feelings we should have, and how we may practice our religion without mistakes. "The word is a lamp unto my feet" (Ps. 118, 105). A well-instructed Catholic is less liable to sin, or, if he sins, he will rise more

promptly, or at least will feel enough remorse to seek a way back.

3. Ignorance is productive of many evils. The wise man says: "All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God" (Wisd. xiii. 1). In conjunction with pride, ignorance obscures the intellect, hardens the heart, produces indifference, moral disorder and forgetfulness of God, and, where God is forgotten, men blaspheme religion and neglect their duties. Thus they fall a prey to error, for they have rejected all knowledge of God, and by their actions they say to Him: "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job xxi. 14). They appear to listen, but complain that they cannot understand. There is no difficulty in understanding a dogma to be believed, but people refuse to understand moral teaching, because it would necessitate a change in their conduct. May God enlighten them! Beware of wilful blindness, and strive rather to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter iii. 18).

II. **Means of acquiring this knowledge.** 1. Hearing sermons. If Christ were to appear visibly, what immense crowds would try to hear Him! As it is, He has commissioned the Church to teach, and "he that is of God, heareth the words of God" (John viii. 47). You ought therefore to hear sermons and instructions of all kinds, whenever you can do so.

2. No excuses can be made for ignorance. You cannot say that you have received sufficient instruction, or that you have no time. You are not asked to make any great effort, only to come, sit down and listen. Perhaps you are afraid that you will have to practice what you learn, and prefer what is pleasant and easy.

3. What are you required to do? To come, listen and make good resolutions. Before the instruction begins, pray for light. Do not give way to a carping, critical spirit. Listen attentively, "He that heareth you, heareth me"; try to fathom the preacher's meaning, and after the instruction give thanks to God, and try to recall the chief points in it.

Peroration. When you have learnt, it remains for you to practice what we teach you. Instructions on religion show us

all that our minds ought to know, our wills ought to accomplish and our hearts ought to love. No one can lightly despise the Word of God. "My word shall not return unto me void" (Is. lv. 11). Happy are they who listen to it and put it into practice.

V. The Help Given Us by God

"No man can say: the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost.—1 Cor. xii. 3.

Our sanctification and salvation are supernatural and divine works; in order to perfect them, we need God's Holy Spirit, which will never fail us. Let us see how He helps us.

I. **The Ten Commandments** contain the law which governs our actions, showing us (1) our duties towards God, viz. to acknowledge His presence and our obligations, to refrain from blasphemy and sins against His Word; and to keep His day holy, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. (2) Our duties towards our family. That the rights of parents must be withheld and no attempts made on the life of others, whilst our own bodies must be respected as the temples of the Holy Ghost. (3) Our duties towards society. Men are brought into connection by means of their material possessions, which we must not injure. A man's word and reputation is a spiritual possession, and we must not defraud him of it. No one is free to covet another's goods, least of all to appropriate his wife, as that would involve the destruction of his whole family life.

II. **The Sacraments.** We exist for God and are going to Him. Baptism gives us a right to say "Our Father," for it makes us co-heirs with Christ. In Confirmation the Holy Spirit makes us soldiers of God, so that we shall conquer in the struggle. In the Holy Eucharist God feeds our souls with the germ of immortality. In the Sacrament of Penance He raises us after our falls, forgives us and restores our courage. In Extreme Unction He helps us in our last struggle and shows us our heavenly crown. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred on those who are to be priests, fathers of souls and members of the sacred hierarchy, the governing body of the Church. Holy Matrimony unites man and wife, sanctifies the home and

the children. Thus God gives potent help to each and all in the Sacraments.

III. **Grace, prayer, doctrine.** Nothing that God commands is impossible, it is even sweet and light (Matt. xi. 30), only we require Christ's help, "Without me you can do nothing" (John xv. 5), and He will give it us (Ezech. xxxvi. 27).

The supernatural gift of grace, in virtue of Christ's merits on the cross, is given us throughout our life in a general way—habitual grace; and more particularly for each action—actual grace. The sacraments are the channels of grace, but over and above what we receive through them we ask it in prayer, when we lift up our souls to God, to do Him homage, to reveal to Him our wants, and to ask His grace. By doctrine we mean the collective teaching of Christ, preserved by the apostles, and conveyed to us by the Church. Remember above all the Apostles' Creed, never forget your catechism; you have truths to believe, commands to put into practice, sacraments to receive.

Peroration. You see what God has done for you, and how His help reaches you by many channels. In your struggle through life you will have to use your intelligence, illumined by divine doctrine, you will have to make acts of your will and aspirations of your heart, and when you have triumphed over all the obstacles that the world puts in your way, God's grace will bring you to heaven.

VI. The Dignity of the Christian

"You are a chosen generation . . . a holy nation, a purchased people."—1 Peter ii. 9.

1. There is nothing greater than a Christian. 2. There is nothing more rare than a true Christian. Let us consider to-day, what you are in theory, and what you ought to be in practice; the dignity and the rarity of a true Christian.

I. **The dignity of the Christian.** Have you ever considered what faith makes you, and how it adds to your worth? God needs no one, yet He created us; He is happy in the full per-

fection of heaven, yet He wishes us to enter thither, and has made us worthy to do so. He "hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12), and He has done this "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter i. 19). Let us then thank Him, as St. Paul says, for having "translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. i. 13).

It follows, therefore, that to be a Christian is better than to hold the highest rank. How exalted an opinion ought Christians to have of the grace of their vocation! Alas, there are some who think of everything else, but only the real followers of Christ can say: *Nos autem in nomine Dei nostri invocabimus* (Ps. 19, 8). What would become of us, if God had left us in paganism, heresy or absence of all religion? "He hath not done in like manner to every nation, and His judgments He hath not made manifest to them." What privileges do you enjoy, and what help sustains you? In the first place you are *Templa Dei vivi,* as St. Paul says. You know God, and this knowledge is better than the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple at Jerusalem and even our tabernacles, for "as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God" (John i. 12). You are therefore sons of God and members of Christ. It may cost you something to live in a way corresponding to your high dignity, but you have God's grace, and the Church offers you great assistance. Only call to mind *Quo vadis?* and remember "that what is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

You have then to fight the good fight, that you may dwell in the peace of God and rest in Him. Let your way of life be blameless; be just in your dealings; keep truth in the depths of your hearts and let not any falsehood stain your lips; do harm to no one, give rise to no scandal, respect God's law and fear Him (Summary of Ps. 14). Do you realize what obligations you have incurred? "Every man . . . is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. v. 3). If you fulfil these obligations you will advance towards perfection, you will grow in virtue, overcome your passions, forsake vain pleasures, and lead a mortified life, failing in none of the duties inculcated in the Gospel. If only we

really understood this, we should pass quickly from the cross to glory! But there is, alas, a great discrepancy between theories and practice.

II. **Rarity of genuine Christians.** Very few people live in the spirit of sacrifice and service of God, and yet: "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 8). What use do you make of time?—indifferent or wicked actions, bad examples, indolence in discharging the duties of your state in life and of religion. Do you cut yourselves off from the spirit, pleasures, intrigues and false pleasures of the world? "The whole world is seated in wickedness" (1 John v. 19). The very fact of your existence should constrain you to refer all your actions to God, but it does not require much examination to show that in many things you do not think of Him at all, and some even of your good deeds are not done for any supernatural motive. So much for what is exterior, for the leaves of the tree; now let us look at the root, viz., our hearts. Have we any true love of God? We often love what has nothing to do with Him or what is actually antagonistic to Him, and we love it more than we love Him. We ought to feel as our Lord did, when He said: "For them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John xvii. 19).

What are the objects of our desires? Do we aim at earthly riches or at obtaining grace and at laying up a store of merit? We bring disgrace upon our Christian profession by our bad deeds and uncharitable feelings, our want of gentleness and patience, and our inability to give helpful advice. We fail in charity towards ourselves when we neglect good inspirations and miss opportunities of benefiting others. Some of us devote ourselves entirely to the world, and lose sight of our last end.

Let us resolve not to deserve the reproach: "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins" (Is. xliii. 24), but rather to struggle against yielding to the opinions of the majority and against human respect. Let us remember how our Lord worked, from the beginning to the end of His life.

Peroration. At this holy time, think that "we were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3), but have been redeemed by Christ, and made children of God, so that all our words and

actions, and our whole life, should tend to His glory (1 Peter iv. 11). St. Leo summons all Christians to recognize their dignity in this world, that they may glory in it in heaven.

VII. Reformation of Life

The result of our retreat should be to effect a change in our way of life; the change ought to be genuine, not fictitious; complete, not partial; permanent, not halfhearted.

I. **A genuine change.** This change was foreshadowed by the manna, that great type of the Eucharist. God caused quails to fall within the camp of the Israelites, but the manna, the bread from heaven, fell outside, and the people had to go out to collect it (Exod. xvi. 4). Abbott Ruppert points out that you must depart from your ordinary life, for otherwise you can neither collect nor eat the manna, and St. Paul bids the Colossians strip themselves of the old man with his deeds (Col. iii. 9). Just as human bread becomes divine, the substance of the one passing into the other, so must you too be changed; this thought is taken from St. Thomas Aquinas. Unless you change thus, says St. Cyprian, you have taken to yourselves not food, but a sword, since sin brings death. The Church says of the Holy Eucharist: *Mors est malis, vita bonis.*

II. **A complete change.** In the Eucharist the whole substance of bread and wine is changed, and it behooves you to be changed no less completely. It is the food of the great, so you must grow and climb up towards perfection. St. Paul tells us: "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). These words are still more true of communicants. Lay aside your imperfections, sins, vices, bad habits—these all belong to "the old man." A single mortal sin may cause your condemnation; one wilful imperfection is enough to keep you estranged from God, hence let him who desires to receive life, change his way of life.

III. **A permanent change.** B. Albert the Great remarks: *Ex sumptione Eucharistiae nullus malus fit bonus.* Take care to reach and to remain in the state of grace. The prophet Osee says of those who repent: *Vivent tritico et dicent: quid mihi ultra*

idold? (xiv. 8, 9). When you have received the Eucharistic bread, what need have you of such idols as avarice, jealousy or disobedience? When Jacob was about to offer sacrifice, he called together all his household, saying: "Cast away the strange gods that are among you, and be cleansed, and change your garments; arise, let us go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 2). Beth = house; Eloa = God.

Why should you go back to your former bad habits? It will always be true that you ought to cling to God, if you are ever to enjoy the honor and glory of heaven. Sin will always be hateful in His sight . . . why not adorn yourselves with virtue?

Peroration. Consider carefully what particular resolutions you ought to make, that you may be able to say with St. Paul: "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

VIII. A Bad Communion

"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."—1 Cor. xi. 29.

It is impossible to touch upon all the important subjects, but, if you consider carefully, you will see that what has already been said should suffice to make you cling to God. There is a false kind of shame which prevents people from confessing certain sins, and thus causes their Communions to be sacrilegious. Let us see to-day what an unworthy Communion is; it shows abominable hypocrisy and boundless ingratitude.

I. **Abominable hypocrisy.** Our Lord often denounced hypocrites, but when anyone makes a bad Communion he appears to be a good Catholic, whereas he is really wicked, "having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5). Our Lord calls such people "hypocrites," "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones" (Matt. xxiii. 27). Such a hypocrite looks like an angel, whilst he is really a devil. Seneca says of a hypocrite that he is *Foris Cato, intus Nero.* A man may display angelic recollection, whilst he is full of diabolical hatred. Remember that after Judas had received the morsel, Satan entered

into him (John xiii. 27). A little morsel of bread, a tiny Host, and then Satan's entrance. The sacrilegious communicant becomes worse than Judas, according to St. John Chrysostom (hom. 60): *Daemonium patiente pejor est qui, postquam peccavit, accedit.* Our Lord said to Judas: "Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 48), but a sacrilegious communicant commits an even greater treachery; he invites Christ to come into his soul, and then hands Him over to the devil. You have all heard of traitors who have surrendered fortresses, and been false to the interests of their country. Treachery is a horrible crime.

II. Boundless ingratitude. St. Augustine calls ingratitude the spiritual root of all evil, a wind that dries up and burns all that is good, a blocking up of the channel by which man receives God's mercy (Solil. c. 18).

Let us acknowledge at least that an unworthy communicant insults Christ, who gives us Himself and says: "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table" (Luke xxii. 29, 30). How great is His generosity, which makes Him in a sense lavish Himself upon us. In Holy Communion God gives us His graces! have you ever thought how precious they are? Weigh these words well, and consider further those of the Wise Man: "I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her" (Wisd. vii. 8). Divine grace belongs to the supernatural order, and is superior to every natural benefit, inasmuch as it was obtained for us at the cost of Christ's labor, merits and death. Let us then repeat: "All you that thirst, come to the waters" (Is. lv. 1). Our divine Lord promises eternal life to those who communicate devoutly: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life" (John vi. 55). To a faithful soul St. Bernard says: "Rejoice, O spouse, for thou hast a pledge, a surety, and thus thou wilt be happily united to thy spouse in glory." Tertullian exclaims indignantly that the Jews ill-treated Christ once only, whereas unworthy communicants continually rend His sacred Body, and St. Peter Damian adds that thus they share in the crime committed by those who crucified Him (Lib. iv. epist. 14). They are preparing for

themselves eternal punishment. "How much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God?" (Heb. x. 29).

Peroration. Beware of bad Communions . . . remember what hypocrisy and what ingratitude they display. . . . Will you ever profane the Sacred Species, the holy Body of Christ? Surely not. Come and make a full and frank confession, so that you may be able to say: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. 107, 2).

IX. Prayer

"We ought always to pray and not to faint."—Luke xviii. 1.

It is not impossible to obey this command; our Lord has told us that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. So He cannot ask impossibilities of us. Of course He does not mean that we ought to be incessantly engaged in saying prayers, but that we should have an habitual desire to lift up our hearts to God, or, in other words, the habit of prayer. Let us consider (1) the essence and expression of prayer, and (2) our reasons for praying.

I. **In active life.** Vocal prayer cannot be continuous. Our daily duties demand our attention, and do not allow of perpetual prayer . . . but we ought at least to raise our thoughts to God at the beginning of the day and before any important undertaking. If you are doing works of mercy, they must, in order to be meritorious, be accompanied by at least mental prayer. *In the contemplative life.* Prayer is a part, and, as it were, the pivot of contemplation, and religious belonging to the contemplative Orders have this one duty to perform. Why cannot our minds dwell perpetually upon God? Because they are too weak; even an eagle cannot gaze at the sun without interruption, and our minds are impeded by our bodies. St. Paul says: "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. xv. 46). Our bodies need food, sleep, rest, recreation—things of no advantage in the spiritual life, but obviously instead of praying always, everyone must devote some time to rest, recreation, etc.

Our thoughts are often engaged with the necessities of this present life, and then we cannot lift up our souls to God. This is why perfect love of God does not exist in this world, and even ecstasies cannot last for ever.

II. **Reasons for prayer.** The reason for or virtue of prayer ought not to cease. There are six points to bear in mind.

1. Our desire of eternal life. We certainly ought always either actually or habitually to desire to possess God. St. Paul told the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing, and St. Augustine explains these words thus: *Id est, continue beatam vitam desiderate; ipsum enim continuum desiderium boni continua est oratio* (In ps. 37, 9). Is it not our duty always to ask for what we must always desire? 2. Devotion. Everything ought to stand in relation to its end, as a remedy stands in relation to the good health that we hope to obtain. Now without piety or devotion towards God, heaven cannot be reached, and where there is no prayer, there is no devotion. 3. Intention. It behooves us above all things to seek God's glory (1 Cor. x. 31). If we do everything for His glory, we praise Him in all things, and prayer united with praise renders it perfect. Intention and prayer should always be united. 4. Good works are equivalent to a good prayer. A just man only ceases to pray when he ceases to be just, and so he who always does right is always praying (St. Aug.). Hence if we always have the intention of doing right, we are in the spirit of prayer. 5. Benefits received. Even when we pass from prayer to some other occupation, we carry with us three good results: (a) devotion increased by the good words uttered during prayer; (b) a spirit of charity, because prayer makes us more gentle and sympathetic; (c) fuller participation in the merits of good Christians, through the Communion of Saints (2 a 2 ae, art. 14). 6. Fixed hours of prayer. Prayer is continual, if made regularly at the appointed hours. Hence it is most important to be punctual at family prayer as well as at church, so that we may keep our promises to God.

Peroration. This instruction should edify and console you, and make you more ready to pray. Pray then on all the seven days of the week, pray before performing the chief actions of each day, pray under the inspiration of the seven gifts of the Holy

Ghost, and pray when you have done wrong, for *Septies in die cadet justus* (Prov. xxiv.). Have courage, prayer will bring us to heaven.

X. Religion

"The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." —Matt. iv. 10.

The practice of religion is the fourth obligation imposed upon us by the first of God's commandments. It is the link, made up of everyday actions, which binds us to God. We have to worship God, and avoid all sins contrary to the spirit of this worship. Let us consider what is meant by worshipping God, and how this worship is to be rendered.

I. Worship. The catechism tells us that to worship God is to pay Him the honor and reverence that are due to Him as the Creator and supreme Ruler of all things. A. 1. We honor our parents, superiors and those set over us. By their goodness, care and dignity they deserve this honor. Still more do we honor the memory of the dead, of our heroes and great men. . . . Is not God worthy of such honor as this and of far greater honor too. 2. We worship Him; worship is a very high degree of honor, an unmistakable mark, both interior and exterior, of honor rendered. You may show outward honor to a man whom in your heart you despise, whilst on the other hand you may feel great inward esteem for another. This is, in its highest degree, the inward worship due to God. Outward reverence for our fellow men is displayed by our manner of greeting them. We show outward worship of God when we genuflect, make the Sign of the Cross, and say vocal prayers. Public worship is rendered by many human beings at once, when they take part in the services of the Church, public prayers, processions, pilgrimages and religious assemblies. B. *What is God?* Our Creator; without Him nothing would exist; we should have no being. We ascribe to God the Father the material creation, to God the Son the spiritual creation, and to God the Holy Ghost our sanctification. From every point of view we owe our existence to Him, and to Him we must return.

He is the supreme Ruler of all things; His Providence controls us, His mercy forgives us, and His justice chastises us in order to raise us. In the intellectual world God always occupies the first place; there are no great thoughts and noble sentiments of which He is not the author. In the world of souls grace proceeds from God, and it works in and through us for our salvation. Heaven and earth and all the beauty that they contain come from God and exist for God, the supreme Ruler of all things.

II. **Acts of worship.** The religious acts by means of which we worship God are: A. Prayer, which is defined as an uplifting of the soul towards God, in order to show Him reverence, to lay before Him our needs and to ask His grace. Let us rise above the ordinary thoughts of our every-day life and soar up towards God. We owe Him our worship, interior, exterior and public. . . . He alone can supply all our needs, for He is infinitely merciful, infinitely good and infinitely rich. He alone can uphold us by His grace, help us to do right, make us triumph over the devil, and bring us to heaven. B. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is a renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, in which the infinite humiliation and merit of Christ are offered to God, who thus is perfectly honored. Let us unite with our divine Redeemer, let us suffer and mortify ourselves with Him, and so share in the satisfaction that He made for sin. C. Presence at public worship. God is in the tabernacle, the altar is His throne. We come before Him as His family and call Him *our* Father. He is our God, and we all belong to Him. The church is His house. Let us all assemble there at certain times. He calls His children together, "as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings" (Matt. xxiii. 37). There is great beauty in public prayer, singing and sacred ritual.

Peroration. In future let us not honor God only with our lips, but adore Him in spirit and in truth (John iv. 23). Come, *Magnificate Dominum mecum, et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum* (Ps. xxxiii. 4).

XI. Preparation for Absolution

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great mercy."—Ps. 50.

God takes pity upon us, because He promises us life everlasting and gives us a pledge of it in Holy Communion. He calls to us: "Come to me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). Let us approach the tribunal of penance to rid ourselves of the burden of our sins. Consider:

I. **The consequences of sin** (1) to each individual. It causes spiritual blindness, tepidity, dislike for God and His worship; it heaps up guilt, bad examples, crimes, and leads to death. The particular judgment may well seem fearful; how horrible must it be to be cast into hell! (2) to God. The rebellious angels were punished and became devils. Hell was brought into existence by sin, and will be for ever the lot of sinners. On earth all abominations proceed from the spirit of hell, and we see the results of sins committed by individuals and by society. . . . It is for God to inflict punishment. (3) to Jesus Christ. Sin caused Him to become incarnate, to lead a life of suffering and to die on the Cross. How boundless was His love! how terrible the punishment of sin!

II. **The blood of Christ cleanses our souls.** Examine your conscience; see how often you have sinned against God, your neighbor and yourself. "Let a man prove himself and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. xi. 28). Hate your sins; conceive for them a sorrow that is interior, universal, supreme and supernatural. This is real contrition (*conterere* to crush the heart) *Cor novum crea in me, Deus* (Ps. 50). Make your confession; it ought to be humble, sincere, complete. Mention all your sins, keeping none back. The wilful omission of one mortal sin would make your confession sacrilegious, a profanation of the sacrament.

III. **The crucifix.** See how our Lord's feet are tortured, and think how many times you have gone out for some useless, if not actually wicked purpose. Will you stay at home, or go to dangerous entertainments, when your feet ought to

carry you here to church on Sunday? His hands are stretched out to welcome you. You have used your hands in stealing, fighting and wrongdoing. Will you not henceforth clasp them in prayer, use them in work, and hold them out to the miserable? His side is pierced. From His sacred Heart proceed the water and blood of the Eucharist, the lifegiving cleansing of our souls in the Sacrament of Penance, and boundless love. Do you love our Saviour? Do you bear Him in your heart? Resolve to love Him more in future. His head is crowned with thorns. How many proud and evil thoughts have come into your head? Why do you not unite your sufferings with your divine Lord's? Why do you by your actions strike the thorns and drive them yet more deeply into His brow? Look at His closed eyes, His pale face, His motionless tongue, . . . and remember that your sins have caused all this.

Peroration. Let us be really sorry for our sins. Absolution is Christ's Blood that cleanses our souls.

Another Outline for a Retreat

Only the headings are given, as the subjects are easy.

I. Eve of the Retreat.
   1. Grace of the retreat.
   2. Solitude and reflection.
   3. Object and result.

II. First day: morning.
   1. The end of man, as designed by our Creator.
   2. The end of a Christian, redeemed by Christ.
   3. Sanctification in our state of life.

III. First day: evening.
   1. Christian feeling displayed in our actions.
   2. Peace with our neighbors.
   3. The virtue of charity, corporal works of mercy.

IV. Afternoon conference or exhortation before a sermon.
   What the catechism tells us about penance.

V. Second day: morning.
   1. Sin, its nature and gravity.
   2. Venial sin.

3. Mortal sin.

VI. Second day: evening.

1. Capital sins.
2. Bad example and scandal.

VII. Afternoon conference.

What the catechism tells us about prayer.

VIII. Third day: morning.

1. Indifference and lukewarmness.
2. The necessity of serving God.
3. The abuse of grace.

IX. Third day: evening.

1. Clearer knowledge of Christ.
2. The binding character of His law.
3. The importance of salvation.

X. Afternoon conference.

The four Last Things.

XI. Fourth day: morning.

1. Thoughts on the Holy Eucharist.
2. Thoughts on Holy Mass.
3. Thoughts on Holy Communion.

XII. Afternoon conference.

Preparation for confession; the cross gives peace to the soul.

XIII. Evening sermon.

Preparation for Holy Communion.

A RETREAT FOR YOUNG GIRLS

I. *Apostolate by example.* Girls can and ought to carry on an apostolate by setting a good example. Three reasons why they should do so: the duty of a Christian, the service of the Church, the will of God.

II. Things to be avoided. Various eccentricities, the evil suggestions of self-love, many forms of luxury, love of display.

III. Virtues to practice. Humility, spirit of mortification, active good will.

IV. Very harmful habits. Waste of time, bad books, bad companions, gossip.

V. Christian practices. Watchfulness, prayer, the sacraments.

VI. *Apostolate by speech.* People talk a great deal about religion without knowing much of it. Every Catholic ought to be well instructed and able to answer objections. You can thus carry on an apostolate at home, when you visit your friends and mix in society.

VII. The great objection is that Christianity has not cured all the ills of the human race; that it is enough to lead a respectable life; that God lets us do and say what we like.

VIII. Criticism based on history. Churchmen possessing the same faults as other people; spiteful suggestions of dishonest historians; the real necessity of understanding the manners and customs of an age, and the circumstances attendant upon the events under discussion.

IX. Criticism of the sacraments. Postponement of baptism; occasional inefficacy of the confessional; Communion resulting in no visible improvement.

X. Cultus of the saints. The saints are truly great, and their works are permanent. By their example they console and strengthen us and suggest fresh works of mercy and civilization.

XI. Cultus of the dead. The last sacraments; civil and religious matters connected with funerals; Various prayers; Purgatory; remembrance of the dead a Christian duty.

XII. Spirit of Faith. In all your conduct show yourselves to be Christians; show it in all your thoughts, plans and actions, in your home life, in society, in all your social and religious undertakings.

A RETREAT FOR WOMEN

I. *The family.* (a) Constitution of the earthly Paradise. Unity, sanctity and indissolubility of marriage. (b) Paganism and its degradation; woman a slave, a chattel. (c) The Mosaic Law: marriage compulsory and its repudiation easy. A widow became the wife of her brother-in-law. (d) Christianity: marriage raised to a higher level. The dignity of our Lady; the position of woman; the sanctity of family life.

II. *Three essentials to family life.* The very existence and prosperity of the family depend upon (a) authority: *Vir caput mulieris* (Ephes. v. 23). Christ is the head of the Church, and the husband is the head of the wife. (b) Devotion; no indifference and above all no antipathy. "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephes. v. 29). Apply this statement to father, mother and children. (c) Obedience. "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." (Ephes. v. applies both to Christ and the Church and to the father and his family.

III. *Two Classes of goods, corresponding to man's* (a) *body and* (b) *soul.* (a) Bodily advantages, life, education, work, property, family happiness. (b) Spiritual advantages, affection, instruction, law, religion, family virtues.

IV. *Woman's place in the family.* (a) Lowered by three forms of selfishness: jealousy, idleness, bad temper—her children will grow up without the faith. (b) Raised by three forces: her rights, dignity and virtues—her children will observe the Gospel precepts. (c) Distinguished by three chief tasks assigned to her—to respect, to educate and to love—her children will be true Christions. (Lacordaire.)

V. *Heroic women.* (a) In the Church: virginity, chastity, suffering, penance and martyrdom. (b) In the family: patience, zeal, self-sacrifice. (c) In history: social, patriotic and national work.

VI. *Holy women.* (a) In the Gospel: they supplied our Lord and His apostles with the necessaries of life, and were the first to know of His resurrection. (b) In religion: good Catholics at Holy Communion; pious souls in the cloister; fervor of the virgins and holy women who have been beatified or canonized by the Church. (Give examples.)

VII. *Women devoted to good works.* (a) In history: women have founded great works, have given an impetus to social institutions, have reformed religious Congregations that had fallen into decay, and have founded monasteries. (b) In Christian countries, they have taken part in parochial and diocesan good works, and have managed schools, dispensaries, guilds and confraternities.

VIII. *Christian women in society.* It is easy for others to speak of religion; women can give information to the ignorant. It is easy to slander and calumniate others; women can protest against such conversation. It is easy to criticize; women can cause the works of God and of our fellow men to be respected.

IX. *Religion in the home.* (a) The mother is the child's first teacher in all things. (b) A Christian wife is a model of piety and religion; (c) Her influence for good has great power over the family.

X. *Works of Mercy.* (a) Personal work connected with the poor, the sick and the infirm. (b) Catholic works of charity approved by the Church, diocese and parish. Collections for various purposes. The spirit of faith in everything.

XI. *Religious questions.* Observance of Sunday by the whole household. Frequent reception of the Sacraments. The Easter duty incumbent upon everyone.

XII. *Raising the tone of family life and of society.* Summary of the good work that Catholic women can do in their own homes. Necessity of preserving the Catholic spirit. Good works undertaken by men, heads of families; practice of religion, patriotism. Great modern examples.

A RETREAT FOR MEN

I. *Ignorance of religion.* (a) Its causes; new methods of education at school and at home, bad publications, self-indulgence, materialistic ideas, neglect of the Church. (b) Its consequences; want of harmony in the family; carelessness about all duties; too frequent disregard of social obligations and the rights of others; the evils that beset Christian society. (c) Means of dispelling this ignorance; a return to the observance of Sunday, intelligent reading of good books, more scrupulous obedience to God's law.

II. *Social and religious ideas.* (a) Social, always changing according to the views of the thinkers and writers most in favor at the moment. Modern ideas, being contrary to the inherited wisdom of the past, constitute a very real danger. (b) Religious; firmly based upon the principles of the Gospel,

the practice of religion, the true good of individuals and families, the supernatural element that suggests them, and the heavenly recompense that will be their crown. (c) Consequences. Decay of Christian principles robs the soul of its supernatural life, weakens the bonds that unite members of a family and gradually undermines society. Therefore we must oppose it energetically, not modifying our statements regarding the faith nor refusing to face their consequences, nor shifting our position, but standing firm without wavering.

III. *Indifference,* a modern error. Religion coming from God ought to dominate our lives; in various centuries there have been persecutions, some with the sword, others with the pen, whilst frequently there have been heretics by word and action resisting the truth. Men have often been deceived and have denied their faith. Indifference at the present day is a revolt against God. A man sees that there are several religions, but wishes to adopt none; he does not even take the trouble to examine them, though he professes to retain a vague religious feeling. Hence we find men who are theists and spiritualists only in theory, for they practice no religion. Indifference is the outcome of inconsistency. People say that all religions are good, in spite of their divergencies; this is unreasonable. They say that they dislike religious arguments, although apart from the points of faith, that alone are essential, there is freedom of opinion on matters of minor importance. Everyone ought to have clear ideas about God, revelation, the divine mysteries, dogma, public worship, everlasting truth, the Gospel, the Church, our salvation.

IV. *A genuine Christian* is one, not in name only, but in deed; Christianity affects his intellect and heart and his future. (a) His mind deals with the doctrines of faith; self-knowledge, knowledge of Christ, His place in the world, God our peacemaker, victim, priest and sanctifier. (b) The maxims of faith give him peace of heart and control his duties towards God, his neighbor and himself. Compare philosophers, ambitious men and those who make no profession of faith with well-instructed Catholics, who do good works and edify others. (c) The promises made to us by our religion are the foundation of all our hopes for the future. In

this world things are always changing, and there is a danger lest our faith should languish and die, or cease to be disinterested. We must cling to the spirit of faith, the sacraments and good works that will win us a place in heaven.

V. *Necessity of Christianity.* Religion effects union in the truth. Lacordaire suggests for our consideration: (a) the failure of philosophy. Useless systems, both ancient and modern; all the good in them is derived from the natural law; we must know our origin and our destiny. (b) Divine instruction indispensable. Pride separates men, and humility unites them; submission to the faith. (c) Authority to hand on this instruction. The Church possesses this authority, and unites learned and unlearned in the same faith; she passed on to posterity a world enlightened by her teaching, and thus she alone united and healed the souls of men.

VI. *Christ's doctrine* embraces (a) all necessary speculative truths, and presents them as complete, free from error, perfectly harmonized and accessible to every kind of intelligence; moreover it inculcates those practical truths which are an unerring guide and stimulus to every Christian. (b) The mysteries and positive commands that raise a man without being opposed to reason; scientific mysteries are matters of human opinion; theological mysteries concern dogma and the sacraments; divine mysteries concern revealed truth. Positive commands control the human will by making it moral, and so add dignity to man. (c) No school of philosophy ever taught any similar doctrine. The preaching of the Gospel modifies the intellectual order by insisting upon a more exalted doctrine; the moral order, by effecting a revival of morality; the political order, by bringing forward new principles in legislation. It is useless to refer to certain pagan maxims which disfigure the law, or to the Mosaic code which is acknowledged to be imperfect. In Christ there is light, superhuman and divine.

VII. *Force of duty.* Lacordaire suggests three thoughts: (a) The idea of duty. This is of supreme importance, since it involves an idea of God, the soul, liberty, responsibility, and immortality. Moreover it cannot exist without generosity, since duty is opposed to pleasure, envy, self-interest and indifference. (b) The action of duty. A sense of duty inspires

every honest and honorable man, every saint and hero. His own conscience confirms the call of duty; the upright agree with and the wicked detest it; human justice and God's judgment both enforce the claims of duty. (c) The object of cultivating a sense of duty. It impresses the idea of morality upon children, the young, the old, families and society. Hence people of every age, temperament, position and character are all aware of duties to be performed.

VIII. *The law of the Gospel* is (a) a rule of sanctity, which is the health of the soul. Consider the source of sanctity—God; the truths that it lays before us; the commandments and counsels that it gives us; the fruits that it produces. Examine the age in which we live; there is generally less care taken to lead honest, respectable lives. Generous souls are those that have faith in God and man.

(b) It is a law of love and grace. The old law was one of fear. Our Lord sums up the new law in the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "If anyone love me, he will keep my word" (John xiv. 23). It is also a law of grace. Moreover the divine law is the model of human law. The Gospel underlies all civilized legislation, and bad laws are anti-Christian. The Roman empire contained only 200,000 citizens; all the rest were slaves.

(c) It is a law that brings happiness. Apart from God, the commandments and the Gospel, there is no happiness. Famous men are known to us by name, the saints by their miracles and good works. In religion; prayer affects both our bodies and souls; we find peace of conscience, comfort in trouble, unfailing hope. There are relics of saints in every altar stone. Glory be to God.

IX. *The apostolicity of the Church.* The Church comes from God. (a) She was founded by the apostles. Our Lord chose the Twelve and gave them their mission, strengthened them at His resurrection and sent the Holy Spirit to them. They dispersed into various countries, preaching and making converts and founding bishoprics, and finally they died as martyrs. Their mortal bodies disappeared, but their work went on, and from them the Christians received rulers. (b) The Church is gov-

erned by the successors of the apostles. Wherever there is a bishop, he represents an apostle. No church has disappeared, as is proved by the intruders. Lists were kept of the lawful successors of the apostles. (c) The Church believes and teaches the doctrine of the apostles. The true Church must hold revealed truth. The apostles heard Christ, and their disciples continued to teach His doctrine; no heretical doctrines have such antiquity. Otherwise how could Christ have desired our salvation? No change is possible; no one can fix the time, or place or say by whom any alteration has ever been made. Where, then, has the true doctrine been preserved? Read the Fathers, who wrote in the earliest times of Christianity; their teaching is identical with ours.

X. *The bark of Peter.* A young Carpenter made the ship of which Peter is the pilot. It will never sink. Let us consider its history.

(a) *In the earliest centuries.* The secular power: government of Jerusalem; senate of Athens; riot at Ephesus; edicts of the Roman Emperors; proconsular tribunals; persecutions. What became of the Church? Her children died as martyrs, but her work went on. Spiritual opposition; heresies arose, schisms rent the Church asunder, barbarians invaded Christendom, Mahomet set up a new religion; still the Church survived, resisted, made converts and spread. In Italy the Caesars gave place to the successors of St. Peter.

(b) *In the Middle Ages and recent times.* In spite of storms the bark of Peter remained afloat. Struggles arose, in the West Gregory VII; in the East Photius and the great schism. The Crusades showed the vitality of the people, and the growth of the religious Orders that of the Church. The schism of Avignon, the rebellion of Luther . . . but the Church weathered all storms, even the revolutions and false philosophies of the 18th Century.

Peroration. Forgive me for wearying you with this long though rapid glance at the history of the Church. The past is our guarantee for the future. "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

Special Subjects for a Men's Retreat

These subjects are chosen with a view to combating the moral disorders prevalent at the present day.

1. Our present maladies.
2. Irreligion.
3. Godless education.
4. Love of money.
5. Class hatred.
6. Vice.
7. Immoral publications.
8. Divorce and its victims.
9. The tyranny of alcohol.
10. Murder.
11. Limitation of the family.
12. Suggested remedies.

VARIOUS SUBJECTS SUITABLE FOR MISSIONS OR RETREATS

LOVE OF GOD

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Matt. xxii. 37). God does not need us, but we need Him. To love Him is both reasonable and beneficial.

I. **Reasonable.** We owe affection to those who do us good. He is our Creator, Benefactor, Preserver, and He will be our reward. He loved us first, *in caritate perpetua,* with infinite love. *Caritatem majorem nemo habet,* and went so far as to adopt us. We owe Him our love in return.

II. **Beneficial.** It is an honor to us to be allowed to love God, and our happiness consists in loving Him as much as possible, for thus we attain to true perfection and sanctification. Let us therefore keep His law, love Him more than all, and overcome all difficulties.

Another Sermon on the Love of God

Two points; it is easy and expedient for us to keep the commandment to love Him.

I. **Easy.** (a) Man must love; it is easy for him to love, and no special knowledge is required to enable him to do so. God knows our frailty and bases the command to love Him on the nature and inclination of our hearts. No one can help loving something. (b) God deserves our love. Love is the outcome of esteem. God is perfect. "O Lord God of hosts, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. 88, 9). He everywhere reveals His perfections, and everything impels us to love Him. In addition to being lovable, He is all goodness. "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!" (Ps. 72, 1). Nothing can be compared with God; there is no excuse for man's ingratitude.

II. **Expedient.** (a) Every action derives its value from love of God; without such love it is a "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Though outwardly pure, it contains nothing; it may not be sinful, but it is devoid of merit. But with love of God we can triumph over all our passions. (Many instances in the lives of the saints.)

(b) Love of God renders difficult actions easy. Human love enables us to make sacrifices and do great deeds, but love of God is still stronger. "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35). "Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or danger? or the sword?" (c) Love of God adds dignity to trifling actions. "All good things came to me together with her" (Wisd. vii. 11). St. Teresa used to say: "Teresa alone can do nothing, but Teresa with Jesus can do everything." Love of God imparts a value to all that we do. The saints all were filled with this love. St. Peter said: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Such love was enough.

Another Sermon on the Same Subject

I. **We ought to love God.** (a) God wishes us to love Him. (b) God orders us to love Him. (c) He deserves our love. (d) He punishes those who love Him not. Therefore let us

obey His command, fear His punishment, and think of the reward.

II. **Tokens of love of God.** (a) To love nothing more than God. (b) To obey His commandments. (c) To be faithful to Him even in little things. Examine yourselves and find out whether you love Him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21).

Three Reasons for Loving God

I. **We owe everything to Him.** *Ex toto corde.* Let us obey Him, when He orders, as He orders, whatever He orders.

II. **We ought to set God first in all things.** There must be no exception to this rule; our preference for God must be genuine, not feigned, and it must be permanent and uninterrupted.

III. **We ought to seek God in all things.** God should be the object of our zeal, thoughts and desires. *Self-examination* (from various authors). Is our love of God displayed in loyalty and obedience to Him in submission and dependence, in giving Him the first place and in preferring Him to all things, in conformity to His will and in striving to be like Him? Do we think of and delight in Him? Are we zealous, generous and steadfast in His service? Do we ardently long to be with Him?

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

"The world was made by Him and the world knew Him not."—John i. 19.

Nineteen centuries of history and civilization prove the force of these words. The Word Uncreated made the material world; the Word Incarnate made the world of the elect and saints. His gospel destroyed paganism and civilized mankind. Two points:

I. **What Christ is to the world.** Man is a rational being, made by God, and it is his duty to turn towards God; thus his destiny is higher than this life. Our Lord Himself said that: "This is eternal life; that they may know . . . the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent" (John xvii. 3). St. Paul speaks of Christ as the one foundation of all faith and of all hope of everlasting life.

Christ is the Son of God; He became man and dwelt among us, being in nature equal to God the Father, but having assumed our human nature in order to make atonement to God for us. There is no limit to His love of us, nor to the expiation that He made. Think of the manger and the cross. Before His coming the human race was in darkness; paganism and the various schools of philosophy were not in agreement even on the most vital points. Since His coming He has occupied a special place in the world, that no one else can claim. From the point of view of doctrine He is the first of teachers, possessing full knowledge of the souls of men. His language is exalted; it brings the supernatural within reach of all; His divine commands . . . From the point of view of His institutions He is the chief Lawgiver, displaying profound wisdom. His Church is a universal society, possessing power, a ministry, activity . . . From the point of view of His sovereignty, He is the supreme Ruler, controlling the innermost thoughts of men; He rules over our conscience, intellect and heart. The world treasures the history of its great heroes, but to Jesus it erects altars.

II. **What the world does in opposition to Christ.** Some people refuse to know God; others invent a religion for themselves. Those who belong to the former class know nothing about Christ. St. Paul says that if the princes of this world had known Him, "they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). The apostles preached "Christ crucified; unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23). Some excuse may be made for them, but since that time opportunities for learning to know Christ have abounded, and the wicked and careless have no one but themselves to blame if they are ignorant. Others deny (1) the excellence of His work—these are heretics and schismatics; (2) the holiness of His moral teaching—these call themselves Christians, but they lead a worldly life, and do not really practice their religion; (3) the Gospel—apostates carried

away by their passions, oppose it; (4) the divine origin of the Church—these are members of sects that declare the Church to have been built up by men, and aim at her destruction. To all alike we may say: "You labor in vain; you may display your hatred, but sooner or later you will pass away, and the Church will survive. History furnishes us with plenty of evidence on this point." Let us then abound in faith, loving and serving Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever (Hebr. xiii. 8), and let us take courage.

GOD AND THE WORLD

"He came unto His own and His own received Him not."—JOHN i. 11.

For 4000 years the coming of the Messias had been foretold by patriarchs and prophets, and both Jews and Gentiles expected a God to redeem them. At length the hour arrived; but what did the world do? Of course many listened to the apostles, for eventually Christianity triumphed; but at what a cost! How many died as martyrs! Let us consider two points: 1. God's work. 2. The world's opposition.

I. **God's work.** God was insulted by Adam and his posterity; so that it became necessary to raise mankind and give them a divine religion. This was accomplished by the mercy and word of God: *Verbum caro factum est.* Our Lord took our sins upon Himself so as to reconcile us with God. At the beginning man received the gift of reason to enlighten him, conscience to enable him to avoid evil, and a holy law to bind him to God. But all had been in vain, so *Verbum caro factum est.* Our Lord bestowed on us His merits, to make us acceptable to God. As God, Christ possesses all the blessings of heaven, but as Man He burdened Himself with all the curses of earth. He made us share in the divine nature, so as to associate us in His promises and glory. By taking our nature, He exalted man, and gave us power to become the sons of God. With Him we are entitled to say: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

II. **The world's opposition.** The world aims at display, though it cannot last; Jesus teaches us to be humble. The

world craves for pleasure and amusement. Jesus teaches us the value of suffering and adds dignity to pain and poverty. The world upholds the so-called right of reason to reject God's revelations, if they are beyond its comprehension. Jesus inculcates docility: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father" (John viii. 38). It was natural for Him, as God, to see; let us believe His testimony and have faith.

The great and learned of this world are very weak and insignificant in comparison with Him; those who deny God have no true insight. Let us turn to the divine Word, who is the way, the truth and the life.

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR

"This is my commandment that you love one another."—JOHN XV. 12.

Some families are closely united, but in social life men are separated by conflicting interests. Nevertheless the commandment holds good; let us see why and how we ought to obey it.

I. **Why we must obey it.** There are two chief reasons. (1) Our neighbor is God's creature; he is called to salvation. Hence God is the Creator and Redeemer of all men. Do not argue that your neighbor has many faults; so have you, but God has not forsaken you on that account. St. Cyril remarks that the likeness of Christ in us is what constitutes the merit of our charity. (2) Consider what our neighbor is, his origin and nature. He is a Christian, his faith and hopes are the same as ours; he receives the same sacraments. "Have we not all one Father" (Mal. ii. 10). "You are the body of Christ and members of member" (1 Cor. xii. 27).

II. **How we ought to obey it.** (a) Our love should be genuine, unfeigned. Often we make a bad choice of our friends; a true friend must be honest, an enemy to vice, and a follower of virtue, if we are to say that he is of one heart and one soul with us. Avoid false friends, who forsake you when you are in trouble. (b) Our love should show itself in good works. Keep your eyes open to your neighbor's needs and be ready to help him. Otherwise how doth the charity of God abide in

you? Too often, alas, our selfishness makes us turn a deaf ear to those who ask our assistance. (c) The motive of our love should be pure. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. v. 2). Christ's love for us is disinterested on His part and undeserved on ours. Let us therefore have disinterested love for our neighbor, no matter how great his faults and shortcomings may be. We are apt to love those only who favor us or who occupy a high position—such love is mere selfishness.

Peroration. "Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. iii. 14).

Another Sermon on Love of Our Neighbor

First outline. The commandment. Three points:

1. **The character of the commandment** requiring us to love our neighbor. St. Augustine remarks that it possesses three excellent qualities—it is most natural, easy and beneficial.

2. **How it is to be fulfilled.** According to St. Bernard, there are more restrictions than one would suppose. Our love must be fervent and zealous, but tempered with justice and discretion. It must have good intentions, but the various interests of our neighbors need discrimination.

3. **The spirit of the commandment** reveals the reason for it. Experience shows that self-love, by referring everything to self, is opposed to charity that ought to refer everything to God. Sometimes we love our neighbor from selfish motives, and then we outwardly do our duty, but have not the right inward spirit. There are six kinds of false conceptions with regard to which we should examine ourselves, viz., those due to pity, vanity, self-interest, justice, unseasonableness, and carelessness.

Third Outline

1. Necessity of loving our neighbor. Reason shows us that it is essential, in accordance with our ideas of the world, society and interest in our surroundings. It is essential also from the point of view of religion and the virtues that it requires of us. Consequently whether we consider the matter as men or as

Christians, we see that it is necessary for us to love our neighbor.

2. Mistakes that affect our love. We must not love certain people to the exclusion of all the rest, nor limit ourselves to outward show of feigned goodwill or mere courtesy, nor be satisfied with giving temporal assistance, where good advice, good example and care are also needed.

3. The extent of our love. Four characteristics. It must be (a) universal in its object, (b) spiritual in its motive, (c) practical, (d) zealous for the salvation of others.

LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES

"I say to you: Love your enemies."—MATT. v. 44.

God lays this command upon us, though it is not easy to obey it.

1. **It is a necessary command.** Vindictive people are full of hatred, and God condemns them and gives us a law that is plain, just and even beneficial. Our enemies themselves have a right to our love, being God's creatures, our brethren in Christ, who are allowed to try us, and thus are the means of our obtaining many graces. Our own self-interest requires us to love them, as thus we gain merit by obeying God, by forgiving others, by doing a difficult good work, and by realizing our own sins. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 2).

2. **Characteristics of real love.** Some mistaken people fancy that they love their enemies, whereas they hate them. Love should be sincere, proceeding from the heart, not content with outward demonstration, free from all resentment. It should aim at doing good, and thus resemble God's goodness; it should find opportunities of giving assistance, and not be blind to the troubles of a neighbor.

OTHER OUTLINES FOR SERMONS ON LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES

I. **God commands us to love them,** and His word is binding. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar . . ." (Matt. v. 23).

Christ is our model. Pharisees, scribes, executioners, Jews of every kind. He worked miracles and redeemed us. Saints and martyrs in every age have followed His example. "Forgive and you shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37). Our own self-interest requires us to be reconciled to our enemies. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." We should remember how often we sin against God and our fellow men.

It is useless to make excuses. We may think it hard to forgive some injury or insult, but St. Augustine tells us: *Dominus jussit, dura jussit, sed magna promisit.* Do not argue that your honor is at stake. Two voices are calling; one is the voice of passion demanding vengeance, the other is that of religion ordering you to forgive. Can you hesitate between obedience to the world and to God? True honor proceeds from God and good people. You may appeal to justice, but you must do so without passion. Do not maintain that wickedness, left unpunished, would abound yet more. No, render good for evil; "Revenge is mine and I will repay them in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35). Do not think that your previous pardon has been misunderstood; forgive again, "until seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii. 22). Do not plead that you did not begin the quarrel. What does that matter? If you offend God you are imitating your enemy.

Conclusion.

II. **Three reasons why men refuse to love their enemies.**

"I cannot."—But God orders you to do so.

"I ought not."—It is useless to plead the customs and maxims of the world, your own position and what is becoming to your rank in life.

"I will not."—Such obstinancy must be overcome by calling to mind Christ's example, promises and threats. Think of the saints and martyrs, how they forgave their enemies.

III. **The Law of Forgiveness.** A vindictive man says: "If I forgave my enemy, I should deprive myself of a right, expose myself unnecessarily to his spite, and give up the only means of upholding my honor that he has assailed. The Gospel, how-

ever, tells us that to avenge ourselves is to claim a right belonging to God alone, to bring disorder into society, to make ourselves the slaves of our passions, and therefore it would be more to our credit to refrain from vengeance. Some people think it enough not to show their hatred, not to return evil for evil, and to deprive themselves of the joy of revenge. But they are wrong; they are required to love their enemy, to do him good, and not to stand aloof from him.

IV. **The thoughts of a true Christian regarding forgiveness.** God requires it of us. God is a Ruler who commands, a Father who speaks, a Teacher who instructs. To every Christian it is honorable to forgive. "The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities" (Prov. xvi. 32). To forgive is a virtue, heroic in itself, exalted in its object, admirable in the sight of men. It is beneficial, for "with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." God's promise cannot fail: He will forgive you, if you forgive, as soon as you forgive, and in proportion as you forgive others.

ALMSGIVING

(See also Sermons for the Sundays.)

First Outline. The Christian Commandment

1. Four reasons for almsgiving. (a) Obedience to God's command. (b) Respect towards God, since we give alms to Him; (c) gratitude, since we give what we have received from God; (d) our own dignity, since we bring ourselves near to God. 2. There are six ways in which a Christian should give alms. (a) With sympathy, avoiding complaints and harshness. (b) With readiness, not imitating those who require much persuasion, lest the really necessitous should be discouraged and driven to despair. (c) Generously, in proportion to our means and without grudging. (d) Secretly, without ostentation, but with simplicity and faith. (e) Honestly, with what belongs to

us and for legitimate reasons. (f) Freely, to all who are in need, though this does not prevent our choosing especially, as objects of our bounty, persons who are otherwise unknown.

Second Outline

Reasons for and advantages of almsgiving.

1. **Reasons for almsgiving.** God orders it: "The rich and poor have met one another; the Lord is the maker of them both" (Prov. xxii. 2). It makes up for the inequality of men's positions—proves the action of Providence—pays a debt due to the poor. "Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest" (Ecclus. iv. 8).

We have duties one towards another, and, as a matter of principle, everyone who possesses property is bound to give alms. "He that hath the substance of this world . . ." (1 John iii. 17). You ought not to wait to be asked, but to stretch out your hands to the poor. "She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor" (Prov. xxxi. 20). Give first of your superfluity, that is, of all that is not indispensable to the wealthy considering their present position" (St. Thomas Aquinas). Make no mistake regarding the limit between what is superfluous and what is indispensable. Give also a little of what you consider indispensable.

2. **Advantages of almsgiving.** (a) It brings down God's blessing upon families. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord" (Prov. xix. 17). God watches over wealthy people who are charitable, and never leaves an almsgiver unrewarded. Do not argue that the wicked often prosper: "I have seen the wicked highly exalted . . . and I passed by, and lo, he was not" (Ps. 36, 35). (b) It secures special graces. "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil" (Ecclus. xxix. 15). "Give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you" (Luke xi. 41). Do not infer from this that penance is useless, but believe that penance is rendered meritorious by almsgiving. (c) It affords us comfort and confidence at the hour of death. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and

the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day" (Ps. 40, 1). "Thy prayers and thy alms are ascended for a memorial in the sight of God" (Acts x. 4). "I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. xxv. 35–40).

Peroration. Miss no opportunity that presents itself of doing kindness. "According to thy ability, be merciful" (Tob. iv. 8). Remark on the excuses made for not giving alms.

1. The command is binding upon all who are wealthy, but many do not think themselves rich enough to give anything.

2. The command is intended to bring help to the poor, but many refuse to believe that those, who profess to be poor, are really in need.

3. The command is always in force; but many never consider that the right moment for giving alms has arrived.

THE DECALOGUE

"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man."—Eccles. xii. 13.

After promulgating His commandments, God declared that they were not too difficult for men to observe (Deut. xxx. 11) and centuries later the Preacher, like every other Israelite, said to his son: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man." Let us consider the possibility of keeping them, the reasons why we should do so, and the manner in which we ought to keep them.

I. **The possibility.** God does not ask us to do impossibilities. He could not require it of us, for He is just, and He would not condemn us for our failure, because He is good. If it were impossible to keep the commandments, neither heaven nor hell would exist. When we remember that God is all wise, we cannot doubt the possibility of obeying Him (St. John Chrys.). He acts like a wise father; who is careful not to overburden his children. God tells us that it is easy to obey His law. "My yoke is sweet and my burden is light" (Matt. xi. 30). Years

later the beloved disciple wrote: "His commandments are not heavy" (1 John v. 3). They can be reduced to a statement of our duties towards God, our families and mankind in general. If you find it hard to obey them, pray to God, who tells us to do what we can, to ask help for what we cannot do, and to profit by His grace so that we may be enabled to do it (St. Augustine). Do not let carelessness or cowardice stand in your way.

II. **Reasons for keeping the commandments.** Three chief reasons. (a) They were given us by God, our Creator, Ruler of heaven and earth. Rulers of this world have a right to be obeyed; can we question the orders of the King of Kings? How can man say: "I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20), and choose another master?

(b) We derive many benefits from keeping them. All things proceed from God, and His graces are innumerable, all tending to our salvation; from Him we receive good inspirations, noble examples and the sacraments. Let us at least be grateful to Him.

(c) The reward for keeping them is great. Men are always asking: "What will you give me?" (Matt. xxvi. 15), or, like Assuerus, "What honor and reward hath Mardochai received?" (Esther vi. 3). Let us bargain with God. Pharao's daughter entrusted the child rescued from the water to the mother of Moses; God entrusts to us our souls, which He destines for heaven. "Keep my commandments, and thou shalt live" (Prov. vii. 2). God promises to be Himself our reward; "I am . . . thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1).

III. **How should we keep the commandments?** Four points.

(a) We must observe every detail in them; one mortal sin will cause our condemnation as well as many. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (James ii. 10). One blow of a dagger can kill, as well as a dozen blows.

(b) If we break one commandment, we insult God as much as if we broke them all; we have no choice; they were promulgated long before we existed at all, and are binding upon every generation. If God left us free to choose which we

should obey, someone or other would reject each detail in the law, and thus it would become of no effect, and God's authority would be set aside. "These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone" (Matt. xxiii. 23). A commandment that is very hard to obey may be to us a source of merit and the pledge of salvation.

(c) We ought to obey from a supernatural motive, with a pure intention. In time we succeed in doing what is supernatural almost without effort, for our life consists in supernatural things.

(d) We must have perseverance. The householder paid the laborers in the evening; let us not give up work before the day is over; "he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). Keeping the commandments is a mark of wisdom; "He that keepeth the law is a wise son" (Prov. xxviii. 7); it is a pledge of happiness "He that keepeth the law is blessed" (Prov. xxix. 18); it is a sign of love for God: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21). No argument to the contrary can have any weight. Do not be false to the interests of your own soul; obedience to God is the whole duty of man; our faith teaches us this lesson, and eternal truth bears testimony to it.

THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY

"Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day."—Ex. xx. 8.

In every age men have felt the necessity of setting apart one day for the service of God, for resting their bodies to recruit their strength, and for uplifting their souls so as to regain confidence and courage. Such a day is beneficial both in family and in social life, and on it man's thoughts are turned especially to morality and virtue. Let us consider the letter, the spirit and the aim of the Third Commandment.

1. **The letter of the Commandment.** "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day." This is perfectly clear. There is to be a difference between Sunday and the other days of the week. Every kind of servile work is forbidden (Lev. xxiii. 25). Our keeping Sunday as a day of rest does not prevent the

crops from growing, nor the sun from ripening them. "Keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary . . . I will give you rain in due seasons, and the ground shall bring forth its increase" (Lev. xxvi. 2–4).

People profane Sunday by working for their own advantage, pleading poverty in excuse. But when God ordered Sunday to be kept holy, He knew that there would always be poor people, and that some day He would punish all alike who despised His law. He knew that He would send floods or drought to destroy work which desecrated His day, and that excessive fatigue might cause men to suffer in health, or else compel them to rest during the week, and so lose all profit from their Sunday work. These are the reasons why we cannot plead poverty as an excuse for doing servile work on Sunday. Another excuse is that we have to live on Sunday as well as on other days. Does God neglect to send rain and sunshine to your fields on Sunday? Do you not often make more than you spend? Without your help God puts grains into the ears of corn that you could not cause to grow. When you have a good harvest, you do not show your gratitude by leading a better life; you often waste on foolish amusements a large part of your savings, or you spend your money in the public house, instead of taking it home with you. Your bodies are not made of iron, and work on Sunday may necessitate rest on Monday. If you work from Monday morning until Saturday night, you have done enough to entitle you to rest on Sunday, and even to make it necessary. Men and beasts alike have need of rest. When a week of ten days was introduced at the time of the French Revolution, the animals showed their objection to it.

II. **The spirit of the Commandment.** Every day it is our duty to serve God, gain merit and prepare for heaven, but Sunday is especially dedicated to divine worship. "Keep my sabbath, for it is holy unto you" (Ex. xxxi. 14). Let us refrain from servile work, but above all from sin. Sunday is, alas, the day when most sins are committed. Some people profane the day by devoting themselves entirely to their own amusement, or they work all the morning, do not attend even a late Mass, and spend all the rest of the day with friends,

frequently in gambling and in unlawful pleasures. Thus indifference and positive sin take the place of true sanctification. Others occupy themselves with carrying out wicked schemes, or in debauchery, so that the day of holiness becomes a time of sin. There is more evil done on this day than there is merit gained on the other six days. Satan is put in the place of God (St. Antoninus).

III. **Aim of the Commandment.** It enjoins more than merely resting on Sunday; after all, people can rest every evening; it does not require us to sit with our hands folded, doing nothing whatever with either our minds or bodies, nor does it bid us spend the day in friendly conversation or in amusement . . . All these things would constitute merely human rest, such as nature might suggest; they would not result in our keeping the day holy. We ought to give it a supernatural character, by performing good works, such as hearing Mass, praying more attentively than usual, visiting the sick and afflicted, instructing the ignorant and forsaken. St. Augustine says that it would be a sin to do nothing at all: *Male celebrat Sabbatum, qui a bonis operibus vacat.* Indolence makes many people keep Sunday badly. They pay no attention to the commandment, live without God, and neglect all their duties towards Him and their fellow men. Sundays spent thus are an abomination to God, who hates every festival of merely human origin that takes the place of His own day. "My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities" (Is. i. 14). "I hate and have rejected your festivities" (Amos v. 21). Indolence on Sunday robs you of merit, and loads you with guilt, for it puts you into the class of those who profane the day, and brings down upon you the curse: "I will scatter upon your face the dung of your festivities" (Mal. ii. 3). Some sin by commission, others by omission, but all are alike guilty if they disregard the Lord's day.

Peroration. If you keep Sunday holy, you will lead a truly Christian life; if you desecrate it, you will be guilty of grievous sin. O God, make me serve Thee faithfully on this holy day, that I may glorify Thee in the unspeakable bliss of eternity. Amen.

DELAY IN CONVERSION

"Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day" . . . "Say not: I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?"—Ecclus. v. 8, 4.

Many people acknowledge that they have neglected their duties as Christians, and that they ought to amend, but they put off this amendment. No man is master of life and death. Even if you were certain to have a long life, and sure to be converted before its close, I should still maintain that you ought to make haste, because God has been so good to you.

1. **Presumed certainty of a long life.** However long your life may be, by deferring your conversion you will not diminish the obstacles to it, for they will remain unchanged, nor their force, which is sure to increase.

A. Consider the power of habit. Habit resists every impulse towards conversion, and binds us under the law of sin by making us yield to the pressure of our passions.

B. Each sin that we commit drags us down, and is, as it were, another link in the chain binding us as slaves to the devil. How are we to escape? Is it likely that a man who cannot make his way out of a pond, will succeed in escaping from the ocean? The devil is too cunning for us, and the number of his victims is always increasing. The merit of the good lies in their opposition to him, but have we any real, courageous determination to resist him?

C. Sin produces a fourfold corruption of our faculties. It darkens our understanding, weakens our will, makes us forget the great principles of Christianity, so that we lose all horror of sin and "drink iniquity like water" (Job xv. 16), and lastly it leads us to despise the commandments of God and the Church. We persuade ourselves that it is enough to recognize some duties towards others, and neither to kill nor to rob our neighbor, but respectability does not make us Christians or save our souls. The prophet Osee writes: "Woe to them for they have departed from me: . . . and woe to them, when I shall depart from them" (vii. 13; ix. 12). These are God's

words—what will it benefit you to live, if you are not converted to Him?

II. **Presumed assurance of future conversion.** Many will have time and opportunity for conversion, but it is folly to believe that you will enjoy this privilege, for who can be certain of living a long time, or of having health and strength to think about his conversion, or of being able in his last illness to prepare for death, or even of not dying suddenly. It is folly not to use time now in gaining merit. Would a soldier remain playing with children, whilst his victorious companions are sacking a town? Would a father or a mother allow themselves to be insulted by their children year after year, believing that some day the same children will treat them with respect? Has a Christian more right to outrage God, than a son to ill-treat his parents? What a store of trouble men lay up for themselves! What difficulties do they put in their own way by deferring their conversion! The old man's "bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (Job xx. 11). Moses broke up the golden calf and made those who had worshipped it drink the ashes; in the same way your own passions will torture you. Now that you are strong and well, you put off your conversion until you are old, and impose upon old age a task to which it will probably be unequal. No one puts the heaviest load upon the weakest of his beasts of burden, leaving the rest free to do as they will.

III. **God's benefits.** In heaven God rewards us for our virtues here below. In order to enjoy eternal life, work hard in this world; it is impossible to earn in one day as much as might be gained by a whole life of labor. You know that God has loved you from all eternity; why do you refuse to love Him until the world has no further attraction for you? God's love is so great! How is it possible that at the eleventh hour, in a very short time, your finite heart can respond to so much love, and obtain so great a reward? A master pays his servants for a whole year's work, not for service rendered in the last few weeks. Employers pay for a day's work, not for an hour or two at the end of the day. In the Gospel we read that our

heavenly Father pays the workers engaged at the last hour as much as those engaged earlier, but the former had not refused to come sooner. A child can merit heaven, as well as an old man, and we, who live at the eleventh hour of the world's history, have as much right to heaven as any of our predecessors. Christ worked for us from the beginning to the end of His life; let us give Him all our life, that we may share His merits.

Peroration. "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him!" (Ecclus. xvii. 28). Therefore praise God and glorify Him, whilst you have life and health . . . do it to-day, at once. Yes, Lord, I am ready; my heart is restless, until it finds rest in Thee. Amen.

THE FORCE OF DUTY

"Come to me, all you that labour."—MATT. xi. 28.

The ignorant and wicked may say what they please, but you will reply: "We have done that which we ought to do" (Luke xvii. 10). Duty is a great force, in its conception, action and object.

I. **The conception of duty.** Men talk about their rights, but with regard to God they have no rights, only duties. All ought to confess their sins and ask for mercy. God comes down and gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. The idea of duty involves (a) the idea of God, just and merciful, ready to forgive if we are contrite. (b) The idea of the soul, of which God is the life, imparting to it aspirations and eternal happiness, and giving us a pledge of this happiness in Holy Communion. "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (John vi. 58). (c) The idea of true freedom. The advocates of free thought are merely slaves to human respect. Let us be free to go to God. (d) The idea of responsibility. Some thinkers deny that any merit is attached to good actions, or any guilt to crimes. Only beings devoid of conscience can expect neither reward nor chastisement. Even in human society honors and penalties are assigned to those who deserve them. God is watching us

from heaven; we must do our duty towards Him. (e) The idea of immortality. The soul cannot die with the body, since it is not subject to corruption in the tomb. If there were nothing but material energy, science would have discovered it and set it in action; the words of the great wonder-workers would have had no effect upon it. Look up to heaven. Man is a fallen king who remembers heaven. We come from God, let us aim at returning to Him.

The ideas that we have been discussing exalt the soul, as may be seen by comparing them with others that contrast with them. For those who deny the force of duty, as understood by a Christian, there is left: 1. Pleasure. A hero who dies in battle, has no delight in death, but is influenced by duty towards his country. What pleasure is there in the life of a Carthusian, a Trappist or a Carmelite? They are guided by their vocation, their sense of duty. 2. Sometimes envy. Lucifer envied the lot of man, who was destined to take his place among the angels in heaven. Envy is a bad counsellor, opposed to the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." 3. Generally self-interest. We are apt to set self before God and our neighbor, to care little for our duties towards others, and so we give way to brutal egoism, a fatal disregard of the precept: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world," etc. 4. Always forgetfulness of our own dignity. St. Augustine and St. Ambrose bid us recognize our dignity. We are intelligent beings, kings of the world and citizens of heaven; why should we fall away from our high position? Look up, and consider your duties.

II. **The action of duty.** A sense of duty is most effectual in raising a man above the things of earth. It makes him first an honest man; this is the first step. Secondly it makes him an honorable man; this is less common. Thirdly it makes him a brave man, prompt to act in times of danger and struggle, because he is controlled and supported by his sense of duty. Fourthly it makes him a hero, entirely forgetful of self; and lastly it renders him a saint, for he shows perpetual heroism in doing what the service of God requires of him.

Our sense of duty is confirmed by the voice of conscience.

"Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. i. 12). "They shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them" (Rom. ii. 15). It is approved by upright men . . . Instances of men who are faithful in the discharge of their duty, thus keeping up the standard of others. A sense of duty arouses the hatred of the wicked; it is creditable to have no share in their evil ways, for they criticize all who are better than themselves and more careful to do what is right. The law punishes persons who fail in their duty as citizens, and thus upholds the tribunal of conscience and of divine justice. Do not be satisfied with behaving as respectable members of society, but show yourselves true Christians. God and the Church both call upon you to do this.

God's judgment confirms our sense of duty. When we appear before Him, it will be useless to make excuses for our omissions, and at the general judgment we shall be put to shame publicly. How bitterly shall we then regret our lukewarmness and cowardice in God's service!

III. **Aim and object of duty.** A sense of duty is strengthened by the consideration of its aim. Apart from it there is no happiness or peace of mind in this world, but the consciousness of duty well performed brings with it great joy. 1. Duties of children. Catechism, First Communion. It is pitiable to see the neglected children of careless parents, who never send them to church. 2. Duties of young people. Monthly Communion, clubs, guilds, congregations for young girls. Parents are much to blame if they allow their sons and daughters to run wild and make bad acquaintances. 3. Duties of grown-up men and women. You are perhaps overwhelmed by the serious cares of life, but everything will seem easier if you seek strength at the foot of the altar; in the confessional the storms are calmed, and at Holy Communion you receive as food of your souls the God who will reward and sustain you. 4. Family duties. The Eucharist unites us with Christ and brings the spirit of peace to our homes. We say with truth: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Each member of the family belongs to God, shares in the same consolation.

It is an inestimable blessing if the whole family is Christian. 5. Duties towards our country. Some of the duties imposed by our country may occasionally demand real heroism on our part. Let us, however, never forget our heavenly country; let us struggle, for life is a conflict, of which the palm of victory is in heaven. Duties call for the practice of virtue, and the triumph of virtue is celebrated in heaven. 6. Duties of old age. Some among you are old, and as you look back over the past, you find no ground for hope but in your good works; "Their works follow them" (Apoc. xiv. 13). You know the value of duty faithfully performed. Let all that you do proceed from a supernatural motive; do everything for God; come and ask pardon for your failures, and receive absolution; come and seek strength and life in Holy Communion with God, your merciful Saviour.

Peroration. My brethren, whatever may be your age, temperament, station or character, each of you has a duty to accomplish, and in the discharge of this duty you will find happiness and glory. It is incumbent upon you as Christians; if you neglect it, you will be disgraced in the sight of the angels, you will be traitors to the Church of your baptism, and you will cause the death of your souls.

FAITH AND IRRELIGION

"He appeared to the eleven . . . and upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart."—MARK xvi. 14.

This is one of the last utterances of our Lord before His ascension; after all the wonders that they had witnessed, some still refuse to believe, some denied Him, because of their hardness of heart. His enemies had cleverly contrived their false statements, and had succeeded in making even some of the disciples believe the report of the guards, who acknowledged that they had been asleep on the morning of the Resurrection. . . . But only ten days after the Ascension 3000 men were converted, and 5000 on the following day, and a few years later the apostles suffered most cruel tortures because

they proclaimed the fact of the Resurrection with all its consequences. Within 300 years more than twelve millions died as martyrs for the faith, and Christ's religion, being accepted everywhere, dominated and civilized the world; the paganism of antiquity had ceased to exist except in books. Christ had promised to make all things new, and to draw all to Himself. . . .

In spite of all this, there are still unbelievers; but their incredulity, hardness of heart and fatal perversity only add glory to our submission. Let us consider to-day the three fundamental reasons for their difficulties. One reason is intrinsic, connected with faith in itself; another is subjective, arising from the unbeliever's attitude of mind; the third is general, due to the atmosphere in which we live.

I. **Reason connected with faith in itself.** Belief does not stop short at certain definite formulae, but affects all our being and demands all its activity. The intellect acquiesces: "I understand that it behooves us to listen to God." The will follows: "I ought to act, I am willing to accept the consequences, and to believe in God." The inevitable consequence is to act in conformity with our belief. God has revealed our religion to us; He has a right to our affection and activity, hence all our thoughts, feelings and actions should tend to Him. He is truth, beauty, goodness. It is for us to subject to Him our intellect, will and heart; this involves our setting ourselves free from the bondage of our passions, the flesh, the world and Satan. We are free souls; it is glorious to serve God; but unbelievers, who act as they please, are held fast in degrading servitude.

II. **Subjective reason for difficulties.** There are four classes of men:

(a) Those who live, or believe that they live, by the light of intellect. We read in history of great thinkers who have acknowledged God's supremacy, but others have blasphemed, because, whilst they were intellectually convinced, their will refused to submit. This is particularly noticeable when they are in danger of death. Other thinkers of less importance have been sceptics, idealists or positivists, others again pan-

theists or materialists, and others have held destructive, not constructive theories. There are plenty of borrowed systems, but men of this class refuse to make an honest study of religion.

(b) Those who are influenced chiefly by their feelings. Man, when he is not directed by a higher wisdom, creates a god or idol for himself, and is not free to wish, think or do anything except with reference to this idol, who is his master. . . . The tragedies that occur in many families prove that this idolatry leads to murder, acts of cruelty and immorality. Human love is a whirlwind with power to infatuate multitudes. Men of this class forget and reject God, and despair soon takes His place.

(c) Those who are influenced by their material surroundings. Society makes great demands upon their energy; they are interested in science, discoveries, improvements, their daily work, etc. In the evenings they scarcely take any rest; they are exhausted by physical, intellectual or social work, and by way of distraction they read a novel or drink alcohol. They know nothing of God.

(d) Those who are influenced chiefly by their animal instincts. Such men never use their intellect; they are not interested in things that awaken the feelings or minds of other persons; they are the scum of the moral world, wild beasts in human form. How can they be tamed? To them morality is obsolete, religion is unknown.

III. **General reason for difficulties regarding faith.** A secret war against religion is going on, and many are anxious not to counteract it. Where such a tendency prevails, what will happen? Man is subject to three kinds of influence, viz., that of the world, that of environment, and that of God and religion. The last constitutes the higher life with hopes of immortality. Man is a "three-storeyed" being; his feet support him and rest on the earth; with his lungs he breathes the air surrounding him; the eyes in his head enable him to look in all directions, even at what is higher than himself. The earth is not everything; we cultivate it, and force it to give us its hidden treasures; we are its superiors. Around us is the world, containing many varieties of men; men of action,

dreamers, materialists. Above us is God, of whom only a few think. Apart from these few, the great mass of mankind is in spiritual darkness. Let us strive to understand, practice and adhere to our faith. . . .

FAITH AND THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

"Who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises." —HEBR. xi. 33.

Man, God, revelation—these are familiar ideas. Let us not limit ourselves to the sphere of science, pure and simple, but at once give our assent to these primary truths, and to all others that are deduced from them; then we shall have faith. This is our standard, which must never be lowered, covered or concealed; this is the first of the theological virtues, taught by the Decalogue. Let us consider first what faith is, and secondly what we mean by the spirit of faith.

I. **Faith.** Faith is a supernatural virtue by which we firmly believe all the truths that God has revealed, and that He teaches us through His Church. (a) It is *a supernatural virtue;* the force which makes us turn to what is good is not satisfied with any finite, material or moral good, limited to this world. Faith comes from God, and its origin is above our nature, so it is a supernatural virtue that raises us to its Author; we turn to God and listen to Him. (b) *All the truths.* God is all perfect, therefore He is eternal truth. We on the other hand are finite and subject to limitations; we receive the truth in a fragmentary form, so that the various manifestations of divine Truth become to us separate truths. To deny any one of them is to refuse belief to the supreme Truth. Hence we must believe *all* the truths. (c) *God has revealed them.* He alone knows Himself perfectly; hence it is only through His word that the object of faith can be made known to us. His word is supreme; it is useless to try to create fresh forms of religion or to modify the Gospel. (d) *God teaches these truths through His Church.* In the State, a legislator does not inform each citizen individually that such and such a law has been made; God determined to

entrust His power to some authority that He would commission: viz., the Church. The Church speaks through her doctors, bishops and councils, and above all through the Pope. Why? Would it be possible for every Christian to consult the Fathers and derive from their writings the information necessary to settle all difficulties and refute every new error? The Supreme Pontiff is required to confirm his brethren in the faith (Luke xxii. 32), and his utterances are the most direct means of refuting each error as it arises. He cannot make a mistake because, as a man, he studies, takes advice and prays; as the universal Teacher he has a right to God's guidance. If God withheld His help, innumerable contradictions would be possible; the Church would cease to be the guardian of truth, and Christ's foundation would no longer exist. The greatest human intellect derives nothing but honor by submitting to the Word of God, who is truth infallible and eternal, infinite in His Wisdom.

II. **The spirit of faith.** St. Paul says: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5). This shows that human knowledge is nothing, God's knowledge is all powerful, and faith is necessary. 1. Let us be filled with the spirit of faith. Would any man regard his own mental powers as superior to God's? His Word is far above us; let us be humble and submissive, our intellectual capacity can never contain all that there is in God's intelligence. Faith includes all that belongs to the knowledge of God Himself; nothing is added to it, nothing is taken away from it. It dominates all our intellect. Faith is living and active, being obedient to Jesus Christ. We must have deeds as well as words. Through faith the saints have performed wonderful works, and God blesses men of faith. 2. Let us never fail in our faith. Some people wish to dispute every point; they believe the statement of men, but argue against God's word. Others will believe only what they please. They think themselves philosophers or theologians, and are in

reality mere talkers, and their opinions are the outcome of their own inclinations and corrupt hearts. Others again do not act in conformity with their belief; but they only make themselves the more guilty, because they sin deliberately. "Shall faith be able to save them?" (James ii. 14.) No, they have no excuse (John xv. 22).

Peroration. O God, Thou askest whether there will be any faith left on earth at the time of Thy second coming . . . the time is growing late, the hour is approaching, and faith continues to diminish. Preserve, we beseech Thee, and confirm in the faith those that are men of good will. Lord, we believe, but do Thou increase our faith (Mark ix. 23).

HONESTY ACCORDING TO THE WORLD'S STANDARD

"Be not as a man that tempteth God."—Ecclus. xviii. 23.

We often hear it said that it is quite enough to be an honest man. Beware of tempting God; do not forget that at the hour of death He will be your judge. Will mere honesty suffice to save your soul? No; the maxim is pronounced false both by the voice of reason and by religion.

I. **The voice of reason.** Some honest men refuse to have anything to do with religion; others are indifferent to all forms of religion, and regard it as a matter of quite secondary importance. It cannot be right to reject all God's claims upon us and to deny that we have any duties towards Him. Those who are indifferent to religion are plainly wrong; but what shall we say of those to assign to it a place inferior to honesty in the eyes of the world? May we look upon God's law as useless? If so, children might despise the rules laid down by their fathers. You who are parents of children—would you approve of this? . . . Some say that they are too busy to attend to religion. They have six days for their work, but God claims the seventh. He thinks about them; why should they forget Him? Sickness is a reminder of death. . . . God bids you remember His rights and power over you. He gave

you both your body and soul; He will be your judge. Some say that they are neither thieves nor murderers, so they need not trouble. But are no men to be accounted wicked except thieves and murderers? We all look down upon scandalmongers, dishonest officials, cowards, traitors, gossips, misers and drunkards, although they may not have robbed or killed anyone. Theft and murder are indeed forbidden in two of the Commandments; but there are eight others; do you never transgress any of them? A man will profess to be honest, and yet he uses bad language, works all Sunday, and drinks on Monday . . . he gives no help to his aged parents, quarrels incessantly, never misses an opportunity of cheating in little things, and has his conscience perverted, whilst he wears a mask of hypocrisy. . . . Such a man is not honest; he is a whitened sepulchre!

II. **Religion.** Let us now raise our thoughts to a higher level. There must be a true religion, because there is a real God, and in order to honor Him, we need religion. There is not a single individual who has no religious duties to perform. Religion concerns the individual. If a man considers the sacraments useless, he is condemning also the Incarnation of the Son of God, the institution of the Eucharist, and His death on Calvary. Was it for no purpose that our Lord trained the apostles, and sent them out to convert the nations? Was it for nothing that eighteen millions died as martyrs rather than deny Christ? Have the lives of all the Anchorites, penitents and saints been useless? Look around you. . . . When the civil government makes laws, is it for no purpose? The natural law forbids robbery, murder and violence . . . to this a positive law is added by human society. If ever you are present in a court of justice you will see men sentenced as criminals who used to pass for respectable citizens, although they were really wicked. Perhaps you know some outwardly respectable family, the members of which practice no religion; sooner or later they will be accused of some crime or wrongdoing, whereas a family consisting of genuine Christians is a credit to the whole town. You can form your own conclusions. As a rule honesty according to the world is not alto-

gether free from defects; sometimes it adopts a hypocritical semblance of religion, and this shows that religion is necessary in order to inspire confidence in others, and that society requires something beyond mere respectability. Do not make any mistake about it; merely outward respectability is pronounced worthless both by our reason and our religion.

Peroration. Amongst men like himself, a savage is quite a respectable man, although you prefer one who is more civilized. Somewhat higher in the social scale, a vicious man is despised, and a respectable man occupies the lowest position that is at all honorable. A true Christian is of far greater value in the world, and a saint has attained to perfection in God's sight. O Lord, we are created for heaven, Thy law constitutes our dignity here, and Thou wilt hereafter reward our obedience to it and our virtues.

IRRELIGION

"Behold they that go far from Thee shall perish."—Ps. 72, 27.

There is only one supreme good, viz., God, and only one bond connecting us with Him, viz., religion. Now it is not easy to be virtuous and moral, and God's knowledge is too great for us to grasp, and consequently some people reject it, and prefer to be independent and to be guided by their own ideas. They have no religion, and this is an evil to individuals, families and society in general.

I. **Individuals.** A true Christian recognizes God's rights and does his duty, but lack of religion leads (1) to egoism, which exalts self above God and our neighbor and transgresses the commandment: "Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." (2) To avarice—which keeps everything for self and refuses to give, thus transgressing the command to seek first the kingdom of God. (3) To indifference, when a man's thoughts are centered upon this world, to the neglect of his soul and his eternal salvation. He forgets the words: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world," etc.

II. **Families.** There are of course many truly Christian families, but who does not know some that have no religion? Among such we see desolation, contempt and unkindness, for they forget the command: "Honour thy father and thy mother." A bad master makes a bad servant; employers often turn those who work for them away from religion and honesty. A family without fear of God sets a bad example to young people, and causes them to lose their faith.

III. **Society in general.** People devoid of religion make bad families, and society is composed of families. At the present time we hear many complaints of universal wickedness; we are told that uprightness, honesty and loyalty are set aside . . . all this is the result of irreligion. Men boast of progress, the advancement of education and liberty, and we see around us a lawlessness that is harmful to everybody. "Why dost thou glory in malice, thou that art mighty in iniquity" (Ps. 51, 1). Those who claim to be freethinkers in religious matters are often free-doers in matters of morality. They object less to the Credo than to the Decalogue, which would impose embarrassing restraints upon them. To society as a whole, as well as to each of its members, God says: "Thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not steal"; how do the heads of families, the men who hold prominent positions in towns or nations exercise their authority?

Peroration. God judges individuals at death, but He judges families and society in this world: "He will render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). Cast aside the passions and subtleties of men, and listen to God's word, for there you will find salvation.

SLANDER

"The detractor is the abomination of men."—Prov. xxiv. 9.

There are many kinds of slander; some are open, and proceed from the bad intention of doing harm; others are underhand, moderate, refined, subtle, proceeding ostensibly from zeal for what is right. The latter are considered less serious,

but they are more dangerous to those who listen to them; more cruel to those against whom they are directed, and more fatal to those who spread them.

I. **Dangerous to those who hear them,** for two reasons: viz., they seem quite credible, and there is a temptation to respect them. The evil intention of the slanderer is ingeniously concealed, and the statements that he makes arouse the curiosity of his hearers, and weaken the resistance that a spirit of charity would prompt them to offer. The hearers ought to say nothing, but nevertheless they repeat what they have heard, and do so with additions, for it is very easy to hint at further misdeeds. For a long time their story is believed, and their hearers in their turn repeat it with further additions and suggestions.

II. **Cruel to their victims,** for two reasons, viz., such detraction is not easily foreseen, and what is unexpected wounds very sharply; an enemy is more formidable in darkness. Besides the detractor is not an open foe, a jealous rival, or one who might be suspected of such conduct. People are ready to listen to him, and what means are there of self-defense? It is hard to bear detraction on the part of a friend. The slanderer often appears to be a friend full of sympathy, with no wish to say anything of serious importance; he speaks under pledge of secrecy, and ostensibly desires to commend his victim. His pretexts are worthless.

III. **Fatal to their authors.** Detractors who profess to be good Christians are peculiarly incorrigible, for they are apt to blind themselves. They speak evil of others whilst pretending to pity them, and sometimes they hypocritically suppress names and details that might reveal the identity of their victims. They continue to seem devout and religious in spite of acting thus. They profess to have excellent intentions, and talk about their hatred of falsehood, the interests of truth, zeal for their neighbor's welfare and even for the glory of God. They are like the Scribes and Pharisees. They are most unwilling to make reparation, for they scarcely believe that they have destroyed the good reputation of another, and consequently they cannot make up their minds to restore it. They

are regarded as good Christians, how can they acknowledge that they have been speaking evil of others?

Peroration. In vain do such persons frequent the Sacraments unless they make restitution. Satisfaction is necessary, as well as contrition and absolution; this rule is clearly laid down.

THE MERCY OF GOD

"We . . . exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain."—2 Cor. vi. 1.

God's justice is made manifest at the judgment that takes place after death; but in this life He shows us His mercy. Sin is the great obstacle to our salvation. Some Christians rely too much, others too little, upon this mercy.

I. **Mercy awaits us.** Three points: God, the sinner, circumstances.

(a) *God.* The soul is like the field where sin has sown cockle. The angels ask whether they shall go and gather up the cockle, but they are told to wait; the sinner may repent in turn his thoughts to heaven. The devils too desire to go to the field, and drive the sinner to despair, but they also are told to wait, because their assaults might be turned into occasions of merit.

(b) *The sinner.* Why does he keep God waiting so long? Why does he reject grace and stay away from the sacraments? God is so good that He waits for you, but you abuse His patience. Have you any right to do so? No, you are committing a fresh sin.

(c) *Circumstances.* On God's side there is excessive goodness, but eventually He will judge. On the side of your friends many, who have suffered more than you, should serve as examples to you. Will you ever do penance? Do not despise the goodness of God, who is still waiting for you.

II. **Mercy invites us.** Mercy is, as it were, the outcome of God's motherly tenderness. "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). "Return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee" (Jer. iii. 1). We should be eager to obey His call, for although He created

you without your cooperation, He will not save you without it (St. Aug.). Say with St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" How often has His voice spoken to you . . . in your own conscience, in good advice, in good examples, and in the promptings of grace. You are a lost sheep, whom our Lord came to seek and to save; you are a sinner, whose death He does not desire, but his conversion and life. What then have you to do? Say, like Job: "Thou shalt call me, and I will answer Thee: to the work of Thy hands Thou shalt reach out Thy right hand. Thou indeed hast numbered my steps, but spare my sins" (Job xiv. 15, 16). Exclaim with thankfulness: "How great is the mercy of the Lord, and His forgiveness to them that turn to Him!" (Ecclus. xvii. 28). He is ready to welcome you.

III. **Mercy welcomes us.** In the depths of your hearts, you, like St. Paul, have heard a voice saying: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." You persecute Him in His worship, commandments and Church; in the person of your neighbor, whom He has redeemed in His blood, and whom you scandalize by your bad example. . . . Will you not answer His call, and say: "I will arise and go to my Father."

When you are inclined not to persevere, remember that a time will come when this fountain of mercy will be for ever dried up. Let the just hope in God, for a crown awaits them if they persevere. Let sinners find courage in hope, that they receive not the grace of God in vain. "No one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded" (Ecclus. ii. 11). "Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus iii. 5). People in the world appreciate generous forgiveness, participation in a rich inheritance, an active share in the government, the highest office in the State . . . but God is more to us than any of these things.

Peroration. O God, how great is Thy mercy; Thou art full of patience, we will no longer put off coming to Thee; Thou art so generous, so full of goodness and strength. We will run to Thee, do Thou receive us. Amen.

THE DEATH OF SINNERS

"The death of the wicked is very evil."—Ps. 33, 22.

Two questions: What has the sinner effected? What will he obtain?

I. **What he has effected.** The past leaves nothing but regrets, the present gives rise to feelings of dread. Past sins accompany the sinner to the time of his death, and produce a bad state of conscience. Death is often sudden, sometimes violent, always inevitable. A sinner puts aside the thought of death, but his sins beset him on every side, penetrate to the depth of his soul, and lead him to death. (Sennacherib, after his defeat by the Israelites, went back to Assyria, where his own sons slew him.) Present sins cause acute bodily pain, terrible mental agony, and want of power to help oneself, since the sinner has no time and no disposition to repent; he has no victorious grace, no opportunity to cooperate with ordinary graces. "Be not foolish, lest thou die before thy time" (Eccles. vii. 18).

II. **What he will obtain.** Creatures abandon the sinner and God rejects him. Friends, parents, temporal possessions, pleasures, accomplices in sin—all pass away. His tools and agents in vice leave him mortally wounded, forsake or crush him, whilst his irreligion, vices and immorality have plainly been his worst enemies. God might protect him, but allows creatures to desert him, and when he blasphemes in his agony, God scourges him. He is powerless to gain merit; he has no treasury of good works, and it is impossible for him to hope, as death prevents any return to what is good. Too late he prays, but his prayer remains unheard, since there is no love of God in his heart. "The city of vanity is broken down; every house is shut up; no man cometh in" (Is. xxiv. 10).

Peroration. Serious self-examination, reflection, and good resolutions.

DEATH AND BURIAL

"He knoweth not what time shall pass, and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die."—Ecclus. xi. 20.

How often do we see the outward tokens of death, and the painful proofs of its power! Its coming leaves many homes desolate, and plunges many households into mourning. Upon each of us God has pronounced the sentence: "Dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return." Let us watch with salutary fear the rapid flight of time. *Nescit homo quod . . .*

I. **Death.** The moment of death is terrible, for it effects a complete severance; everything leaves us, and we leave everything. No longer have we any property, home or family; nothing remains but a few planks, a few feet of earth. Death is terrible in its consequences also, for eternity depends upon it. Do you not realize that we cannot possibly regard it with indifference? When you have breathed your last, there will be no further hope of mercy, no possibility of merit. The thought of death has driven countless souls into the wilderness or to the cloister. The Church Militant, to which the dying man belonged, appeals on his behalf to all the hosts in heaven. You know what happened to St. Francis Borgia, after seeing the coffin opened, that contained Queen Isabella's body. The remembrance of death produces three effects: (a) it detaches us from the world. The deceptive charm of earth vanishes at the appearance of death. "All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on" (Wis. v. 9). The traces of the runner on the sand are carried away by the wind; St. Jerome remarks that one, who remembers that he has to die, easily despises everything.

The remembrance of death serves as a check upon our passions; thoughts of pride and revenge vanish. "Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin" (Eccles vii. 40). It is a pledge of a better life. As a man lives, so shall he die. "Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. xxv. 13). What is death, not to others, but to ourselves? I shall certainly die, but where? When? How?

I cannot say. Are we ready to die? If we are sinners, the past will cause us only bitter regret, the present nothing but grief and pain, and the future agonizing uncertainty, perhaps despair. If we are righteous, death will have no horrors, for our sins are forgiven, our troubles are at an end, and we abound in good works. "Their works follow them" (Apoc. xiv. 13).

II. **Burial.** Charles V, after his abdication, withdrew to a monastery, and, wishing to see how his funeral would be carried out, laid himself under the pall. Three days later he died of emotion. The cemetery—place of rest—is consecrated ground, where the dead sleep until their awakening at the last day. When you pass the gate, do you ever think that you will eventually find a resting place there? Our forefathers have all gone before us; we, who are still alive, shall follow them ere long. Their bodies rest, buried beneath the stones, and awaiting the end of the world. The half century or more that you may live in a town or village is a very short time compared with your sojourn in the churchyard, where your ancestors already lie, and your children will join you. Visit this spot sometimes in thought; from these graves a voice seems to speak to your heart, saying: "You have the law and the prophets; act in conformity with them." This warning is given you by friends, parents, perhaps by accomplices and victims. You can learn a useful lesson from their virtues and defects.

Supposing God were to allow them to rise again and appear in your midst—they would not behave now as they did in the past. Let the young, who think of nothing but gaiety and amusement, listen to the lesson that the dead can teach. Call to mind their dying words, their last injunctions, the terrible but salutary truths that they uttered. How did those die who had practised their religion? What about those who neglected it?

Peroration. Every moment brings us nearer death. "Depart, O Christian soul!"—depart now from your evil ways and bad habits, so that you may be able to say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. iv. 7). "With him that feareth the Lord it shall go well in the

latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed" (Ecclus. i. 13).

DEATH

Death takes us by surprise; strips us of all our possessions; gives us no possibility of return.

I. **Takes us by surprise.** "Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come" (Luke xii. 40). God has decreed that every man must die, and this decree is infallible, just, universal, always in force. Death comes sooner than we expect. "Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die" (Is. xxxviii. 1). Do not think that you are young and strong, or that you have plans to carry out, or that you are indispensable to your family. "I stand at the door and knock," for the good and virtuous; but for the wicked "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." Beware.

II. **Strips us of all our possessions.** "Doth bitter death separate in this manner" (1 Kings xv. 32). We lose for ever all our advantages of body, the use of our senses, the gifts of fortune, the things to which we are attached, the pleasures of the world, the company of our family. All this is inevitable, and when we are in good health we refuse to face the coming separation, but at death we realize its completeness, and great anxiety lays hold upon us. We shall never regain possession of what we are losing.

III. **Gives us no possibility of return.** "There is no going back of our end" (Wis. ii. 5). Time disappears and eternity opens; there we shall remain irrevocably. In this life our circumstances and impressions are always changing, but in eternity there is no modification, no alteration. The tree is felled . . . the rock rests at the foot of the precipice. "They who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither" (Luke xvi. 26). There is but one eternity, changeless, endless. Think what eternity means.

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."—2 MACH. xii. 46.

We ought to pray for the dead, and we ought also to consider to-day what Purgatory is. We may sum up what we know of it by saying shortly that it is (I) an abyss of suffering, (II) a place of remorse.

I. **An abyss of suffering.** An abyss, because we fall into it so easily. It is hard to be perfect, and we make light of venial sin, and so we must needs go to Purgatory when we die. God is merciful to us during this life, but at our death He will be our Judge. We shall then no longer receive absolution or the sacraments; and nothing imperfect can enter heaven.

It is an abyss of fire. St. Paul says: "If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15). "Fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is" (v. 13). God's power has assigned this fire to the souls of the departed. The justice of God purifies by means of fire the souls of the righteous. The wisdom of God enables it to distinguish the kind and gravity of each sin: "Inasmuch as she hath . . . lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her. . . . Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be burned with the fire" (Apoc. xviii. 17, 18).

Purgatory is an abyss of suffering. It is all but the agonizing pain of the lost; the only difference being that a limit is assigned to the duration of the pains of Purgatory, and that the souls there can look forward to heaven. No earthly suffering is comparable with that of Purgatory. Its torments are indescribable, greater than those of Calvary (St. Bede and St. Bernard); more intense than any undergone by the martyrs (St. Bede), and almost equal to those of the lost (Suarez, part 3, disp. 33). They are very long, for their intensity makes the time seem endless. St. Antoninus speaks of the appearance to some one of a soul, an hour after death, who believed that it had been suffering for several years in Purgatory

(Summa, p. 3, tit. xiv, c. 10). Grievous sins require more expiation. Revelations mentioned by St. Bede, St. Dionys. Cart., and Bellarmine show that certain souls will be in Purgatory until the end of the world.

II. **A place of remorse.** Many martyrs were imprisoned for the faith, and their imprisonment is their glory, but the righteous, who have not fully expiated their sins in this world, are imprisoned in Purgatory, and this is their punishment.

Their state of bondage is the result of sin. "The cords of the wicked have encompassed me" (Ps. 118, 61). "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John viii. 34). They are in exile; they love God, for they departed from this world with sanctifying grace, and they would fain enter heaven, but they need further purification. "Now also my words are in bitterness" (Job xxiii. 2). They are still deprived of the sight of God, and are like Esau, of whom we read that he "wept with a loud cry" (Gen. xxvii. 38) on hearing that he had lost his father's blessing.

David exhorted the people to "turn away from evil and do good, seek after peace and pursue it" (Ps. 33, 15). But these souls have not sufficiently avoided sin, even though they have done some good. They regret three things, viz., that they have not refrained from sin, not practiced virtue, and not been eager enough for heaven. As a reward for the merit that they have acquired, angels come to console them, but still they grieve over their exclusion from heaven. The guilt but not the punishment of their mortal sins is remitted. So Nathan said to David: "The Lord hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die; nevertheless because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (2 Kings xii. 13, 14). Venial sins are committed without full deliberation, or are less important, but still they must be expiated. My brethren, beware of sinning with your lips, your hearts, or your hands.

The souls in Purgatory regret that they have not done more good, they are tormented by the gnawing pain of remorse. "We have been able to shew no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness" (Wisd. v. 13). They ask themselves

why they have failed to accomplish this or that good work, why they have been satisfied with doing it partially, if indeed they did not put it off altogether. "Behold I perish with great grief in a strange land" (1 Mach. vi. 13). They reproach themselves with having cared very little for heaven. It is useless to say: "Our Father, who art in heaven" unless we do our best to reach our true home. Here below innumerable distractions prevent us from thinking much about it, but in Purgatory the souls dwell upon it without ceasing. They might so easily have deserved admittance! St. Bridget speaks (l. iv. c. 14) of the purgatory of desire. Too late have these souls longed for heaven; "We sat and wept, when we remembered Sion" (Ps. 136, 1). In time they will enter thither, but first they must continue to suffer.

Let us not be contented with pitying these souls. They will not be released until they have satisfied divine justice. Let us help them with our prayers, alms and Masses. Let us not be indifferent to their pain. Who could wish to abide in the midst of a consuming fire? They cry to us *Miseremini mei . . . saltem vos, amici mei.* We have been their friends, perhaps we have shared in their sins. Our parents may have erred through their affection for us. Let us pray much and often for the dead. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." When they enter heaven, they will pray all the more for us.

Another Sermon on Prayers for the Dead

For us, to pray for the dead is a duty imposed upon us by justice, for the dead, our prayer is an act of charity, of which they stand in need.

I. **A duty imposed on us by justice.** It is not enough to feel pity for the dead; they have natural claims upon us. Our Lord wept over Lazarus; St. Augustine mourned for the death of his mother; St. Ambrose grieved over the sins of Theodosius. Outward display is not the chief thing. Moreover the dead have other claims upon us, based upon choice and preference. Those who inherit their property and who have received their instructions are bound to carry out their wishes;

and yet how often are injunctions, promises and pledges to make reparation forgotten! Lastly the dead have supernatural claims upon us, based upon religion. We owe them some return for the kindness that they have shown us during life; we should offer the ordinary prayers for them; have Masses said, and never apply to other uses money that they wished to be devoted to some pious work.

II. **An act of charity.** On earth there are three degrees of misery: imaginary, real and excessive. But in Purgatory all suffering is genuine and most agonizing. Remember the severity of God's judgments, the frailty of man, and the scanty penance for sin done in this world.

The souls cannot help themselves; after death they can merit no graces, their destiny is fixed. It is only in this life that satisfaction can be made for sin, but we can offer them our merits, in virtue of the Communion of Saints. The Church urges us to pray for the dead, to obtain indulgences and to hear Mass for them.

SIN

"We that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?"—Rom. vi. 2.

Sin is, strictly speaking, the only real evil. In the beginning it brought death upon us, and our own sins may ruin us for all eternity. It is a revolt against God, and an insult to Him; it is a disaster to man, involving him in many evils.

I. **Sin is an outrage upon God,** for our own sense tells us that "it is just to be subject to God" (2 Mach. ix. 12). We obey our parents, rulers and the law . . . A sinner, a worm of earth, cries: "I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). He uses God's grace and mercy against Him, in the service of his own passions, creatures and devils. A sinner despises God, who is so good, great, generous and perfect; we abandon Him for the sake of creatures, fleeting pleasures or through mere indolence. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord" (Jer. ii. 12). Wherever we look,

we see those "whose God is their belly"; although they know that he who commits sin is of the devil, men desert God for the sake of "a handful of barley and a piece of bread" (Ezech. xiii. 19).

The sinner is guilty of the basest ingratitude. Even worldly people dislike and despise ingratitude; surely it is a far worse offence when man is ungrateful to God! How many benefits have we received from Him in the natural order! How many graces! How many promises! And from what terrible evils in time and in eternity does He deliver us! When He came amongst men in human form, He was crucified by the Jews, but we offend Him in the splendor of His majesty; we are more guilty than they (St. Dionys.).

II. **Sin is man's enemy,** for it makes us lose God, who is our only Good, in this world and the next. It is an abomination to God, and cuts him off from us. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisd. xiv. 9). Can you realize what it means to be hateful to God? It means that your soul is deprived of all supernatural light, and in its blindness becomes the victim of error and the devil, and falls into the abyss. "They shall walk in vain and shall perish" (Job vi. 18). Sin involves the death of the soul, which dies when it loses God, just as the body dies when separated from the soul (St. Augustine). All the merit of previous good works is lost, until the soul returns to the state of grace. As long as sin is present, no reward is possible, for you are working in darkness; ask God to come back to you. "We have labored all the night and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke v. 5). St. Ambrose says that a sinner's conscience is filled with more corruption than a grave. Sin turns God's creatures against Him. The wise man says: "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Wisd. xi. 17). Everything ought to help us to praise God and to save our souls; why do we put things to a use other than that for which they were designed? They will bear witness against us. Think of what has happened in heaven and on earth; the rebellious angels; the fall of man; the deluge; Sodom and Gomorrha; the golden calf; plagues, famines, disasters, wars, enmities,

sickness and death; all these are the terrible results of sin; we sin, expecting to derive from it some pleasure in life, but it leads to suffering and death. "Understand these things, you that forget God" (Ps. 49, 22). "Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19). Let us examine ourselves carefully. (Story of Blanche of Castile, the mother of St. Louis: "Rather death than one mortal sin.")

Peroration. "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent" (Ecclus. xxi. 2). "From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves" (1 Thess. v. 22). "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xviii. 1). "This do and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 28).

SINS OF THE TONGUE

"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison."—JAMES iii. 5, 8.

God bestowed on man the gift of speech . . . but how often is a bad use made of it! Instead of blessing and praising God, men blaspheme; and instead of living at peace with their neighbor, they slander or calumniate him.

I. **Sins of the tongue against God** are of two kinds. (a) Blasphemy, which is (1) madness, of no possible use; (2) impiety, involving contempt of the God of all holiness; (3) sacrilege, for it profanes the holy Name of God; (4) suggested by the devil, God's implacable foe. (b) Oaths and curses, which are (1) an insult to God and His providence and justice; (2) an insult to our neighbor, (3) a wrong to ourselves, for we render ourselves guilty of a serious sin. Do not plead in excuse that you had good ground for anger, or that you are so much in the habit of swearing that you cannot help it; you must amend your way.

II. **Sins of the tongue against our neighbor.** Our Lord said: "Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these is of evil" (Matt. v. 37). These sins fall into four classes; lying, detraction and calumny, rash judgments, false witness.

A. Lying. 1. Offends God. "Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord" (Prov. xii. 22). 2. It is harmful to society: "A thief is better than a man that is always lying" (Ecclus. xx. 27). 3. It is injurious to the liar, for it destroys his reputation and brings down failure and ruin upon his enterprises. "The mouth that belieth, killeth the soul" (Wisd. i. 11).

B. Detraction and calumny. "Detractors, hateful to God" (Rom. i. 30). One who is prone to direct detraction imputes faults to others, makes their shortcomings known without any necessity, exaggerates and puts a bad interpretation even on what is good.

One who gives way to indirect detraction denies or diminishes what is good, or keeps silent when he should speak, or "damns with faint praise."

Opportunities for detraction abound everywhere; other vices require certain conditions, such as theft, drunkenness. Beware of inquisitive persons, prattlers and gossips; "Their throat is an open sepulchre" (Ps. 13, 3).

C. Rash judgment. 1. God alone has the right to judge the thoughts of men; by rash judgment we infringe upon His right. 2. It is opposed to the spirit of charity. "Charity thinketh no evil." We should fear reprisals. 3. It is opposed to the truth. We should not be guided by appearances, nor should we criticize intentions, nor believe the reports of envious persons.

D. False witness is an outrage upon truth, charity, justice and religion. God requires the evidence of trustworthy witnesses; a false witness causes annoyance, shame, desolation, dishonor, ruin and even death. (Story of Naboth, 3 Kings xxi, and of Susanna, Daniel xiii).

Peroration. Sins of the tongue may be appalling crimes, remember that the tongue is a destructive fire, deadly poison . . . Be on your guard.

RELIGION

"I am the way, the truth and the life."—JOHN xiv. 6.

We may apply these words, uttered by our Lord, to His religion, which is the bond of union between God and man. The way leads us to God; there is only one true religion. If we are to remain in the right way, we need the truth; there is no religious truth except through revelation. If we are to preserve the truth, we must live a Christian life, for that alone prepares our souls for heaven.

I. **Religion, the way.** Being intelligent creatures, we have an immortal destiny. Religion teaches us God's rights, that cannot be diminished, and man's duties, from which no one is dispensed. This comprises everything—so we have commandments to obey, sacraments to receive, the Gospel to believe; and each of us possesses a soul that came from God and ought to be brought back to Him. Where there is no religion, human knowledge may puff men up, but it cannot satisfy them. Presumption leads them astray, dangers beset them and they obtain no help from above. Whence can we derive strength and wisdom, unless it be from God?

II. **Religion, the truth.** The mind of man and his reason are limited; he does not possess the source of all knowledge, which resides in God alone. "Only religion can solve the problems presented by philosophy" (Maine de Biran). Religion is the guide to all truth. There is but one primary truth, proceeding from God, who spoke to Adam, the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, and lastly to us also through Christ, who said: "I am the light of the world."

III. **Religion, the life.** By life we mean more than the life of the body, which enables us to move and walk. We mean also the life of the soul, which enables us to use our intelligence and enlarge our minds. This is to live in the fullest sense under the eye of God. The world has produced great thinkers, who often differ one from another. Some have founded religions, but they are very imperfect. Look at Christ, the Son of God, made man, mighty in miracles. His teaching

never varies; it condemns all vice and inculcates all virtue. Think how many followers He has had during nineteen centuries! Call to mind the wonderful variety of Christians, saints, men of action and of good works. In Christ is life, the health of the soul, leading to eternity. "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Peroration. Lift up your eyes and hearts; religion is given us by God to raise us to Himself, the way, the truth and the life.

THE CATECHISM

"Ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth."—2 Tim. iii. 17.

At the present day these words are particularly true; we never know enough about the doctrines of the Church. She possesses the light proceeding from God, to enlighten the souls of men; she is the way, the truth and the life. We ought to be well instructed as to the truths of religion, the reasons for aiming at perfection, and the lives of those who edify us by their example.

I. **Truths of religion.** These are divine in origin, and we ought to believe and practice them, in order to save our souls. A priest should instruct his people continually. "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God" . . . He must not tamper with the truth. Many, alas, ignore and distort it, and express their own views and opinions, but God has spoken . . . He must speak plainly and correctly: "Let your speech be: yes, yes; no, no."

II. **Reasons for aiming at perfection.** Human morality is not enough; more is required of us than simply to be respectable men and women. A good Christian stands on a higher level. St. James says (i. 4): "You may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." Religion supplies us with motives of all kinds to meet our various needs. It holds out to us promises for this life and the next.

III. **Edifying examples.** We read of the Israelites that God "gave to everyone of them commandment concerning his

neighbor" (Ecclus. xvii. 12). St. Paul says. "Edify one another, as you also do" (1 Thess. v. 11). Edifying examples abound in the lives of the saints and the history of Christianity. There have been saints of every age, rank and position. Good examples are set us by our neighbors; every Sunday we see many at Holy Communion. "Thou renewest thy witnesses against me" (Job x. 17). Eleazar, though old, set an example of courage to the young. The Machabees, when young, took an oath of fidelity to the law.

Peroration. Make three good resolutions: 1. To attach great importance to being present at instructions and catechizing, 2. to attend regularly, 3. to try to induce others to come. Be always "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 10).

HUMAN RESPECT

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel."—Rom. i. 16.

God did not make His religion dependent upon the discussions of men, nor is the success of His Son's mission left undecided and exposed to their contradiction. Christianity exists, based on religious principles, and it ought to be our support; the chief impediment to it lies in human respect, which is both unworthy and sinful.

I. **It is unworthy,** because it is the outcome of servility and cowardice. Slavery is opposed to liberty. Men boast about their rights, they extol equality, acknowledge no rulers except such as can easily be set aside, and rebel even against God . . . yet, while still professing to admire liberty, they make themselves the slaves of any wicked man, who resents their using their freedom in doing their duty towards God and in acknowledging His rights over them. Why should we cringe before a sarcastic smile, a few light words, or the bad example of one worse than ourselves? He wishes to make us resemble himself; we ought rather to win him over by our goodness. People talk about liberty of conscience; Lucifer, Nero and Diocletian did the same, whilst persecuting the servants of God. Nowadays we are not called upon to face cauldrons of boiling pitch or wild beasts . . . the worst things that we have

to encounter are smiles and words. Christians should rebel against the slavery imposed upon them by human respect, and assert their freedom to serve God as they ought. Human respect is a mark of cowardice. On the field of battle a soldier who runs away, throws down his arms, and hands over the flag to the enemy is called a coward and a traitor. Yet all around him shells and bullets may be flying, and he sees his comrades fall on every side; his fear is not a crime, but deliberate desertion is certainly criminal. We are soldiers in Christ's army; "Fight the good fight of faith," do not yield to ridicule, or bad examples, for if you do this, you will be false to your faith and will forfeit your spiritual life.

II. **It is criminal** for three reasons: A. It destroys the love of God, for it puts fear of man in its place, and takes away all fear of God's justice. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Eccles. i. 16). This kind of folly puts us on a level with the pagans, to whom Tertullian used to say that they dreaded Caesar more than Jupiter. So Gregory teaches us that there is nothing which we ought to avoid more carefully than substituting fear of man for fear of God. Holy Scripture teaches the same lesson. B. It involves fresh apostasy. In ancient times apostates burnt a few grains of incense before an idol, and thus escaped torture and death, but what have we to gain by being false to God? St. John Chrysostom applies the name "apostate" to any man who is afraid to profess himself a Christian. Are any of us apostates in this sense? C. It is deliberate contempt of God's graces. One who sins through human respect probably regrets it at first, but in time he grows hardened, and adopts habits opposed to Christianity. A tree that has taken deep root is difficult to remove. How is it possible for one who is ashamed of Christ to be converted and make reparation?

No one can safely rely upon a deathbed conversion. The way to hell is paved with good intentions that have not been carried into execution. Cowardly and sinful human respect leads only to apostasy and final condemnation. If you have been cowardly and ashamed of God, there can be no salvation for you.

Peroration. Let us stand firm and remember the great duty that we have to perform; we must satisfy the voice of conscience, acknowledge God's rights over us and the claims of truth and religion. May we be able to say, like St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Amen.

SCANDAL

"Put not a stumbling-block or a scandal in your brother's way."—Rom. xiv. 13.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines scandal as *Dictum vel factum occasionem praebens ruinae, etsi habens speciem mali.* There are two kinds of scandalmongers of different types.

I. **Scandalmongers who are worldly and wicked persons.** *Vae mundo a scandalis.* There is no sin worse in its nature, for it causes the death of souls dear to God, that need to be taught what is good, whereas they are poisoned by scandal. Anyone can detect flagrant evil, but below the surface, less easy of detection, are hidden snares, false principles, erroneous doctrines—these are the works of the devil. A scandalmonger is the devil's tool and accomplice in tempting and ruining others.

Scandal causes fatal blindness. A man guilty of scandal has no scruples; he allows himself complete liberty of speech and action; he seems unaware of what scandal is, and notices neither its malignity nor its results; in fact he regards it as something quite unimportant and does not hold himself responsible when a tiny spark gives rise to a great conflagration.

No sin is more infectious or more productive of evil; the errors of heresiarchs, bad books, moral downfall of the persons affected. It is easier to follow a bad than a good example . . . curiosity eager for evil reports, pleasure in calumny, excuses for one's own defects.

II. **Scandalmongers who are pious.** In his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter XIII, St. Paul describes charity towards one's neighbor, but all this is forgotten by a pious person who wishes to be scandalized. Scandal is suspicious in its origin, a

sign of cowardice. Why should you find fault with people who differ from you? You will have to answer to God for yourself, not for others, examine your own heart. You do wrong even when you are scandalized at sin. Why do you not distinguish between sin and the sinner? Pray, and remember that our Lord said to the apostles: "You know not of what spirit you are." Scandal often has its source in jealousy. This was the case with the Pharisees; this prompted the remark made by Judas when Mary Magdalene anointed our Lord. If you are jealous, prayers and almsgiving find no favor with God. Scandal sometimes proceeds from bitterness and hatred. Somebody happens to displease you, and you ridicule him, whilst you think all that a friend does, is perfect. A true Christian is not scandalized; he recognizes his own faults, and makes excuses for those of others. "Much peace have they that love thy law; and to them there is no stumbling-block" (Ps. 118, 165). Scandal is most harmful in its effects. Jeremias wept over the disgrace of Sion, but those who pretend to be pious delight in gossip, exaggerations, bad interpretations, suppositions, lies, and deny the existence of any good intention or anything upright in those who do not find favor in their sight. Such spurious Christians pretend to feel pity, but really they take pleasure in repeating tales that may do harm, and secretly they desire to be regarded as the only sincere and good people. Their neighbors may not be irreproachable, but spurious Christians are far worse. True piety hides the faults of others under a cloak of silence, but an evil heart spreads poison abroad. They forget: "If thou, Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall endure it?" (Ps. 129, 3).

Another Sermon on Scandal

"Wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh."—Matt. xviii. 7.

I. Scandal, an insult to God. It robs God, our Creator, of the glory that His creatures owe Him, for the man who gives scandal by his words, example, writings and advice turns others from God and frustrates Christ's work for the salvation of souls. He came down from heaven for our salvation, but

scandal destroys His plan, assails religion and turns souls away from it. Scandal makes men resemble the devil, who goes about, seeking whom he may devour. Any companion, who leads you gradually away from God, is doing the devil's work.

II. **Scandal, an injury to man.** Being a most grievous sin, it will be severely punished. There are degrees both of virtue and vice, and in the same way there are degrees of merit on the one hand and of chastisement on the other. "He that deceiveth the just in a wicked way shall fall in his own destruction" (Prov. xxviii. 10). The consequences of this sin are peculiarly hard to repair, and so repentance is most difficult. Bad impressions are apt to remain, and to affect other people. It is impossible to undo all the harm and to make reparation to all the persons concerned.

Peroration. Avoid all appearance of evil; edify your neighbor, keep silence regarding his faults and pray to God for him.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel."—Mark xvi. 15.

Nearly 2000 years have proved that the teaching of Christ stands far superior to any other, but nevertheless there are still many false philosophers and men who think themselves wiser than they are.

Let us begin with the statement that the doctrines of Christianity contain all truths, speculative as well as practical.

I. **Speculative truths.** These are such as present themselves to us from the point of view of theories and principles. They are present in Christ's teaching, complete, free from all error, perfectly harmonious, intelligible to all minds.

1. The doctrines of Christianity are complete. Philosophers agree in thinking that man needs to know (a) what is above him, viz., the existence and nature of the supreme Being, who is the first cause of all other beings; (b) what is around him, viz., the world and its origin, and the author of the laws that control and preserve it; (c) what concerns himself, his origin and nature; (d) his last end, and by what means he can attain

it. All other truths are comprised under these headings, because every question must refer to one or other of them.

(a) Above man is God. What did paganism teach about God? The schools of philosophy are all at variance, and non-Christian sects have very worthless ideas about Him. Christianity stands far higher, and the Christian conception of God is incomparably superior to those of deists, pantheists, materialists and spiritualists.

(b) Around man is the world. Many theories have been propounded regarding its origin and antiquity, and the laws that govern it. In its creation and government the world reveals God's power; it is of time, not of eternity, and its very structure shows that it will eventually perish.

(c) What man is. The first man received his being, body and soul, from God; successive generations have perpetuated the human race, and God always creates a soul to be united with each body. Our ills come from ourselves, in the first instance through the sin of Adam, and later on through the sins of mankind in general, but Christian civilization diminishes the evils that are our inheritance.

(d) Man's last end. The body is mortal, but the soul is spiritual, and survives the body. Beyond the tomb rewards and penalties await us, and the body must rise again, because it, too, must be rewarded or punished.

2. The doctrines of Christianity are free from all error. Various systems have been devised by schools of philosophers, but they are manifestly false, being contradictory among themselves, and they are rejected by Christianity, which alone is true, and to which converts turn as soon as they reject their former views. It cannot be itself a false system, because in that case there would be no truth anywhere, and truth must necessarily be revealed. There are of course differences, due to their various modes of interpretation, among the Christian sects, but these differences are the work of men, and the Gospel which alone preserves for us the utterances of Christ, is not responsible for them. Our Lord's teaching is therefore complete and free from error.

3. The doctrines of Christianity are prefectly harmonious.

Their unity is so absolute that everything depends upon it. If one dogma is destroyed, the whole edifice falls into ruins. Thus without the doctrine of the Trinity, there can be no Incarnation; without the God-man, no redemption; without authority, no absolute certainty on points of doctrine, and so on. If the God-man came to redeem mankind, there must be sin to expiate, sacraments to sanctify, glory to reward; and the Church with her hierarchy must needs exist.

4. The doctrines of Christianity are intelligible to all minds. Philosophers taught their systems only to a chosen few; Christianity is for all men without exception. Her doctrines are so profound as to satisfy the most subtle philosophers; those who study them honestly are always discovering new beauties to admire; those who strive to contradict them are reduced to silence by their depth. At the same time these doctrines are so simple that unlearned men can grasp them, and need only short explanations in order to fathom their meaning. The speculative truths of the natural order are all contained most perfectly in the doctrines of Christianity.

II. **Practical truths.** These consist of the application of doctrine to conscience and morality, so that it becomes a guide to our conduct. Practical truths show us the safe course to follow, and impel us to lead moral lives. They form a far more important part in the teaching of Christianity than in that of any other system.

The branch of philosophy known as Ethics divides the practical or moral virtues into three classes; our duties towards God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Beyond these there are none to be considered. God, the Author of all things, who created us and who will be our judge; our neighbor, i.e., our relatives, friends and all with whom we come into contact; ourselves, our duties and our rights. Our divine Lord laid down the rule: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart . . . and thy neighbor as thyself." All our duties are summed up in these words. Paganism cared very little about God and our neighbor, and encouraged a spirit of selfishness, but the Gospel shows how all our other duties towards God flow from love of Him, and how civilization and universal

brotherhood are the outcome of love of our neighbor; moreover it inculcates all the virtues that make man truly great. Christianity is indeed the safest way, better than any system of philosophy, whether it be the harshness of Stoicism or the degradation of Epicureanism.

Christianity impels men to do good, and supplies three safeguards to morality. (a) Every Christian has as his model Jesus Christ, who is all perfect. From the merely human point of view our Lord is superior to all the other teachers of the world; even a pagan emperor proposed putting a statue of Him amongst those of the gods. From the Christian point of view He is incomparably higher, even in the purely natural order. (b) Every Christian realizes the importance of God's approval. In this life he feels the dignity of virtue, he experiences consolation in adversity and peace of conscience. A Latin poet says that an honest man would not be moved even if the whole world fell in ruins about him. In the next life, eternal glory awaits the righteous, endless misery will be the lot of the wicked. (c) A Christian is certain of help. God is spirit and life, and He does not merely order us to do right, but helps us to act as He commands. He not only preserves our bodily life, by supplying what is necessary for its maintenance, but He gives us thoughts and inspirations to strengthen us and enable us to carry out our good resolutions.

Thus, from the practical standpoint, moral truths correspond to our sensible faculties as well as to our intellectual life, and consequently speculative and practical truths, even of the natural order, are comprised in the doctrines of Christianity, as has just been shown.

THE PERFECTION OF THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations."—MATT. xxviii. 19.

The Apostles received a divine mission, and the doctrine that they were to teach was heavenly, and intended for all

mankind. It contains mysteries to be believed, which transcend human reason, and precepts to be obeyed, which perhaps seem beyond our power to fulfil. Might it not be better to adhere to the simple philosophy of educated men? Let us study these three things—mysteries, precepts, philosophy.

I. **Mysteries.** By mysteries we mean truths so far surpassing human intelligence that reason itself could not have discovered them, and consequently, when it knows them, it is still incapable of giving an intrinsic proof of them. Among pagans and non-Christians, rites to which only the initiated were admitted were called mysteries, but later on the word was applied to the secrets of God, revealed truths.

There are some mysteries the existence of which can be discovered by the light of reason, although their essence is not explained; these are scientific mysteries, about which various opinions are held.

There are other mysteries, not even the existence of which could have been discovered by the light of reason, that can only understand their nature; these are theological mysteries, concerning positive institutions, and occupying the second rank in religion.

Lastly there are true mysteries of which neither the existence could be discovered, nor the essence understood by the light of reason; these are the higher truths of primary importance that God has revealed in His religion.

Reason cannot deny to God the right to reveal the truths that are His; nor can it deny that man is bound to listen to such a revelation. "Man, who is the pupil of his fellow man on the subject of scientific truths, may well be the pupil of God on the subject of supernatural truths."

Every religion contained mysteries, more or less rational, but pagan mythology cannot satisfy us. Cicero and Seneca ridiculed their gods; many of the philosophers were sceptics, but Christianity, on the contrary, numbers among its adherents men of the highest intelligence as well as the uneducated. Its mysteries satisfy the most exacting and learned; it reveals to man a wealth of knowledge regarding God, His works and Providence. None of the religions of antiquity could be com-

pared with it, nor can human reason gainsay it. God's knowledge being infinite, the mind of man can neither grasp nor contain it. This superabundance of divine truths lies therefore beyond the reach of our reason, but is not contrary to it. If there is error anywhere it is in man's attitude towards God.

In addition to the mysteries that increase our intelligence, religion gives us positive commands to incline our will towards morality.

II. **Commands.** These positive commands require us to perform certain actions which it would be wrong to omit. Among pagan nations, the laws were such as to allow moral corruption to prevail in every class. Pliny acknowledges this fact, and bears testimony to Christianity, which gathered its adherents together every Sunday to sing hymns in honor of Christ, and taught them to avoid theft, robbery, adultery, bad faith and receiving stolen goods (lib. x. n. 96).

St. John Chrysostom says that Christians had "passed from self-indulgence to fasting, from love of money to poverty, from wanton delights to continence, from rage to sweetness, from envy to goodwill, etc."

No pagan religion taught true morality, whereas Christianity made even society moral, whilst the change effected in family life is noticed by both Christians and pagans; poets, philosophers and historians all bear witness to it. Pagan morals were depraved not by human reason, but by the animal passions; all virtues inculcated in the Gospels raise man to a higher level, without doing violence to his reason.

III. **Wisdom.** No school of philosophy taught doctrines resembling those of Christianity, which are based on the Gospel. This is evident *a priori,* and evident also from the point of view of their excellence, since no philosopher ever put forward any doctrines so pure and so exalted. Thus the preaching of the Gospel effected a threefold change in the world; in the intellectual order, by means of loftier teaching; in the moral order, by raising the standard of morality; in the political order, by introducing new principles of legislation on matters affecting family and social life. Protection was afforded to the rights of children, wives and servants, and then fresh laws

were made regarding liberty, charity and the rights of nations. The law of the Ten Tables at Rome ordered a deformed child to be destroyed, and Seneca approved the regulation as reasonable. The same custom prevailed in Greece, and Aristotle lays it down as a law (Pol. lib. vii). Wives were the instruments of luxury and pleasure, not the companions of their husbands, who were allowed to beat them, hire them out to others, repudiate and even kill them. Everywhere slaves were regarded as chattels, not as human beings. On the other hand the Gospel teaching was: "Let the little ones come unto me"; marriage was holy, slaves were their master's brethren, redeemed by the same Saviour. Moreover Christianity borrowed nothing from Jewish doctors or pagan philosophers, for although the New is the complement of the Old Testament, the teaching of Moses is very imperfect in comparison with that of Christ. The Mosaic Law was known only to the Jews; the Gospel has been preached to all nations. The Jews expected a temporal deliverer, the Redemption is essentially spiritual. The Jewish sects had introduced all kinds of innovations into the Mosaic traditions, but Christians worship God in spirit and in truth. The Jews insisted on an outward display of virtue, but Christian sanctity proceeds primarily from the heart.

Some of the Greek and Roman philosophers taught excellent maxims, but none formulated a religion with public cultus and sacraments; none ever called the common people to him, and those who were contemporaries of our Lord made no attempt to do anything. Towards the middle of the fourth century the pagans desired to introduce into their temples some kind of ceremonial resembling that of the Christians, and to render their mythology more spiritual; but the attempt was clumsy and evidently too late, and it met with no success. We derive this information from St. Augustine.

Even the most conspicuous philosophers were devoid of that superhuman light that shone forth in Christ and His apostles; there was nothing in them that could be ascribed to a divine mission and a supernatural revelation, nothing capable of solving religious difficulties, of attracting the hearts of men and of finding

acceptation in every age. Christ alone was divinely sent to reveal this doctrine. A century ago a great thinker, Maine de Biran, used to say that religion alone was able to solve all the problems that philosophy could propound. He perceived that no school of philosophy had ever risen to the height of the teaching of Christ.

We may conclude, therefore, that Christianity comes from God. Let us resolve to believe implicitly in Christ and His Church, to accept their teaching and carry out their commands.

Index

PAGE

Advent Courses 341
Almsgiving 105, 388
Amendment of Life 36

Blindness, spiritual 30

Catechism, the 424
Charity 104
Childhood, Christian 6
Christ, see Jesus Christ.
Christian, the dignity of the 119, 359
—— , his duties 147
Christians, indifferent 102
Church, the authority of the 343
—— , teaching of the 31
—— , behavior in 98
—— , new, dedication of 333
Commandments, the Ten 390
Communion, holy . . . . . 205 seqq.
—— , frequent . . . . . 209 seqq.
—— , Easter 45, 47, 52
—— , a bad 363
Companions, good and bad 60
Conscience, remorse of 99
—— , the voice of 64
Conversion, delay of 395
Corpus Christi . . . . . 199 seqq.
Cross, the holy 168
——, the sacrifice of the 72
Cursing 90

Death 111, 415
——, of sinner 412
——, and burial 413
Duties, social 125
Duty, aim and object of 397

Easter precept, the 45, 47, 52
Eucharist, the holy . . . . . 178 seqq.
Example, good and bad 95, 135

Faith, imperfect 120
——, and Irreligion 400, 407
——, and the spirit of Faith 403
——, the reward of 107
Farewell Discourse on Pastor's call to another Mission 336
Feasts of our Lord and of the Saints, see List of Contents.
Flattery 123
Forty Hours' devotion . . . . . 178 seqq.

PAGE
Ghost, the Holy . . . 66
God, His grace . . . 98, 127
——, His Providence . . . 42, 93
——, His mercy . . . 109, 110
——, the Word of . . . 25
——, our Master . . . 109
——, and the World . . . 383
Graduating exercises, addresses at . . . 339, 340
Gratefulness to God . . . 106

Honesty . . . 405
Humility . . . 113, 136
Hypocrisy . . . 94

Idleness . . . 22
Intermingling of good and bad, benefit of . . . 16

Jesus, the Child, model for children . . . 4, 6
——, His holy Name . . . 144, 147
——, His sacred Passion . . . 28, 49, 149
——, His Resurrection . . . 154
——, His Ascension . . . 162
——, Christ, the Teacher . . . 4
——, the Lawgiver . . . 5
——, the Messias . . . 115
——, Our Ruler, Mediator and Judge . . . 164
——, His enemies . . . 44, 118
——, His gifts . . . 178
——, His works . . . 133
——, The good Shepherd . . . 58
——, His love for the weak and erring . . . 80
Judgment, the General . . . 129, 131, 132
—— , the particular . . . 123

Lenten courses . . . 345
Leprosy, a type of sin . . . 12, 106
Life, a worthless . . . 122
Love of God . . . 114, 379, 380
—— of the Neighbor . . . 104, 115, 384
—— of Enemies . . . 386

Man, the end of . . . 351
Marriage . . . 7, 328
Mass, the Holy Sacrifice of the . . . 72, 187 seqq.
——, a Priest's first . . . 334
May Devotions . . . 244
Means of Grace . . . 358
Mercy of God . . . 410
—— , works of . . . 95
Mission Sermons . . . 346

Neighbor, love of the . . . 104, 115

October Devotions . . . 255

Parish church, the . . . 88, 98, 198
Patriotism of the good Christian . . . 125
Perseverance . . . 55

PAGE
Prayer 365
Prayers for the Dead 416
Pride 113, 136
Priest's first Mass 334
—— , Silver Jubilee 336
Priesthood 334
Prophecies, Messianic 137
Prosperity, wordly dangers of 18
Providence, divine 42, 93, 109
Purgatory 416

Reformation of life 362
Religion, the benefits of 118, 367
Religion, the Christian 423, 429, 432
—— , knowledge of 356
Religious, Profession of a 337
Respect, human 425
Resurrection from death 110, 129
Retreats, see List of Contents.

Sacred Heart, the 214
Sacrifice, the, of the Cross 72
—— , —, of the Mass . . . . . 72, 157 seqq.
Saints, Feasts of, see List of Contents.
Scandal 427
Scapulars 226, 261
School, laying corner stone of 340
Self-satisfaction 101
Sin 352, 419
——, the leprosy of the soul 12, 106
——, mortal 126, 128
——, relapse into 39
——, venial 91, 126, 128
Sins of the tongue 421
Slander 408, 421
Sunday Observance 112, 392

Temptations 33
Time and Eternity 139
Trinity, the Most Holy 69

Virgin, the Blessed, see List of Contents.

Work, necessity of 22
Works, good 97
World, the 63, 108
——, detachment from this 167
——, End of the 129
Wrath 90

Zeal, religious 121

251.8
M 691
14637
MISSIONARIES
AUTHOR
Preacher's Vademecum
TITLE
DATE LOANED
BORROWER'S NAME
ROOM NUMBER
STORAGE - CR
14637
NE AUFERATUR